Introduction to Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory) and Evidence

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Abstract

Interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPARTheory) is an evidence-based theory of socialization and lifespan development. It is composed of three subtheories, each of which deals with a separate but interrelated set of issues. IPARTheory's personality subtheory – which is the most highly developed component of the theory – deals primarily with the pancultural nature and effects of interpersonal acceptance and rejection. Coping subtheory explores the fact that some individuals are better able to cope with experiences of perceived rejection than are other individuals. Finally, IPARTheory's sociocultural systems subtheory attempts to predict and explain major causes and sociocultural correlates of interpersonal acceptance-rejection worldwide. Empirical evidence overwhelmingly supports the theory's major postulates and predictions, especially postulates and predictions in personality subtheory. Emerging evidence about the neurobiological and biochemical risks posed for the development, structure, and function of the human brain are beginning to help explain why these postulates and predictions are so consistently confirmed panculturally.

Overview of Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory)

"*Parental love is the single most important factor in a child's life*" Ronald P. Rohner

Interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPARTheory) is an evidence-based theory of socialization and lifespan development that aims to predict and explain major consequences, causes, and other correlates of interpersonal acceptance and rejection worldwide (Rohner, 1986, 2004; Rohner and Lansford, 2017; Rohner and Rohner, 1980). In the beginning (1960), the theory focused on the effects of perceived *parental* acceptance-rejection in childhood and extending into adulthood. At that time the theory was called "parental acceptance- rejection theory" (PARTheory). But by 2000 the theory had broadened to include intimate adult relationships, relationships with siblings, peers, grandparents, and other significant interpersonal relationships throughout the lifespan. This shift in emphasis led in 2014 to the transition of the theory and its name from PARTheory to its current designation: *Interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPARTheory).* Despite this change in name and emphasis, significant portions of the theory continue to feature the effects, causes, and other correlates of children's perceptions of parental acceptance-rejection, and of adults' remembrances of parental acceptance- rejection in childhood. That portion of the theory is given greatest emphasis in this chapter. You can watch the 14-minute TEDx Talk, (Figure 1), to get an overview of the breadth-and-depth of IPARTheory research.

Figure 1. They Love Me, They Love Me Not – And Why It Matters, TEDxUConn
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ePXxeGrfvQ&t=3s

IPARTheory addresses five classes of issues divided into three subtheories. These are personality subtheory, coping subtheory, and sociocultural systems model and subtheory. Personality subtheory postulates that three specific forms of behavior are

characteristic of humans in all populations worldwide. First, children and adults everywhere—regardless of differences in culture, race, language, gender, and other such defining conditions—understand themselves to be cared-about by the people most important to them (i.e., accepted) or not cared-about (i.e., rejected) in the same four ways. Second, children and adults everywhere tend to respond in the same seven to ten ways when they perceive themselves to be accepted or rejected by their attachment figures (e.g., parents in childhood and intimate partners in adulthood). Third, the effects of childhood acceptance and rejection tend to extend into adulthood and old age. These apparent facts about human behavior are explained at greater length in this chapter.

Coping subtheory recognizes that some children (and adults) are better able than others to cope emotionally with the corrosive drizzle of day to day rejection. Given this fact, coping subtheory attempts to predict and explain major factors that give some individuals the resilience to emotionally cope more effectively than most people with the experience of childhood rejection. Finally, sociocultural systems model and subtheory deals with two very different classes of issues. First, it recognizes that some parents are warm and loving whereas others tend to be cold, aggressive, and/or neglecting/rejecting. Sociocultural subtheory is interested in predicting and explaining the sociocultural and personal conditions under which parents are likely to accept or reject their children. Is it true, for example—as the subtheory 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 sociocultural group tend to either accept or reject their children? For example, is it true—as sociocultural systems subtheory 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 IPARTheory'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 interpersonal acceptance-rejection published since the end of the nineteenth century, mostly within the United States. From these sources, IPARTheory attempts to formulate a lifespan developmental perspective on issues surrounding the effects, causes, and other correlates of interpersonal acceptance and rejection. Much of this lifespan perspective is incorporated into the theory's personality subtheory. Before discussing that subtheory, however, I discuss the concepts of interpersonal acceptance and rejection, or the warmth dimension of interpersonal relationships, especially parenting. At this point I should mention that the term *parent* refers in IPARTheory to whoever the major caregiver(s) is/are of a child—not necessarily to biological or adoptive parents.

The Warmth Dimension of Interpersonal Relationships

Together, interpersonal acceptance and rejection form the warmth dimension of interpersonal relationships, including parenting. This is a dimension or continuum on which all humans can be placed because all children experience more or less love at the hands of their parents and other people most important to them. Thus, the warmth dimension has to do with the quality of the affectional bond between individuals (e.g., between children and their parents, and between intimate adults, among others). In particular, the warmth dimension focuses on the physical, verbal, and symbolic behaviors that individuals use to express their caring or lack of caring about the other person. One end of the continuum is marked by interpersonal acceptance, which refers to the warmth, affection, care, comfort, concern, nurturance, support, or simply love that one individual can express toward another. The other end of the continuum is marked by interpersonal rejection, which refers to the absence or significant withdrawal of these positive feelings and behaviors, and by the presence of a variety of physically and psychologically hurtful behaviors and affects. It is important to note that individuals are not either accepted or rejected in any categorical sense. Rather, everyone falls somewhere along the warmth dimension, experiencing varying degrees of acceptance and rejection in their relationships with significant others.

Extensive cross-cultural research in IPARTheory over the course of six decades reveals that interpersonal rejection can be experienced by any combination of four principal expressions: Parents, intimate partners, and others can be (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 the significant others do not really care about them or love them, even though there might not be clear behavioral indicators that the parent or significant other is neglecting, unaffectionate, or aggressive toward them.

These behaviors are shown graphically in Figure 2. Here I focus on the parent-child relationship for ease of presentation, even though everything I say is also true for other types of attachment relationships throughout the lifespan. Elements to the left of the slash marks (i.e., warmth or coldness, hostility, and indifference) in the Figure 2 refer to internal, psychological states of parents. That is, children may perceive their parents to be warm (or cold, distant, and unloving) or to be hostile, angry, bitter, resentful, irritable, impatient, dismissive, denigrating, or antagonistic toward them.
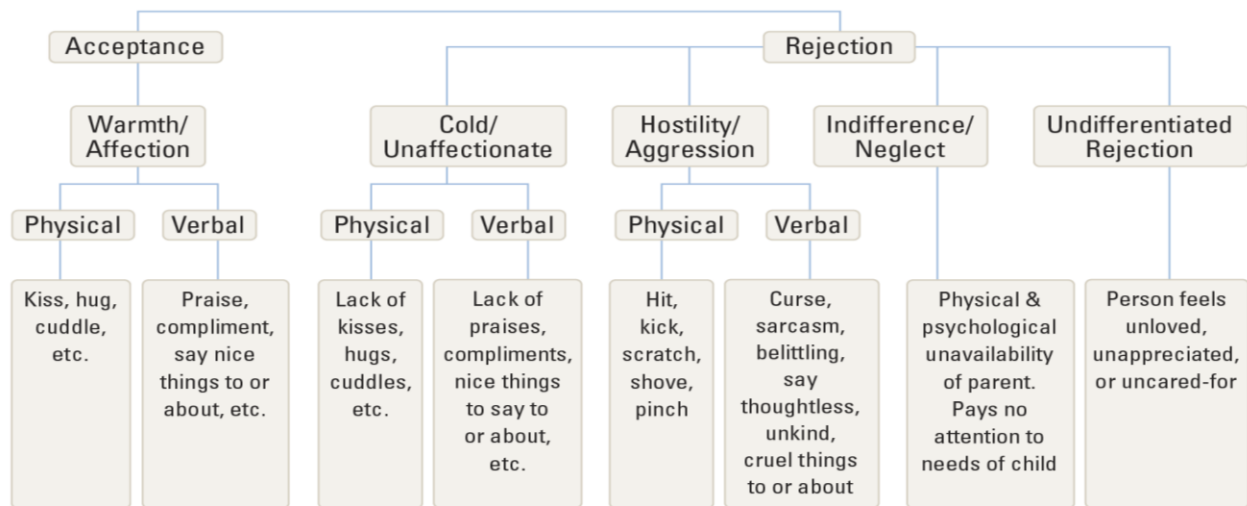
Figure 2. The warmth dimension of interpersonal relationships.

Alternatively, children may perceive their parents to be unconcerned and uncaring about them, or to have a restricted interest in their overall well-being. Elements to the right of   the slash marks in Figure 2 (affection, aggression, and neglect) refer to *observable* behaviors that result when parents act on these emotions. As noted in the Figure, 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 IPARTheory, aggression is any behavior where there is the intention of hurting someone, something, or oneself (physically or emotionally). Figure 2 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 others. I should point out here that verbal aggression can be as hurtful and damaging as physical aggression−or even more so− as highlighted in my revision of a well-known adage:

> *Sticks and stones may break my bones*
> *But words…*
> *They may destroy me!*

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 their children for many reasons that have nothing to do with indifference. For example, it sometimes happens that parents will 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 the social and emotional needs of the child. Often, for example, neglecting parents pay little attention to their 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 by their parents. Even in warm and loving families, however, children are likely to occasionally experience a few of these hurtful emotions and behaviors.

Thus, it is important to be aware that interpersonal 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. IPARTheory research suggests, however, that if the conclusions are very discrepant one should generally trust the information derived from the phenomenological perspective. This is true because an individual (e.g., child) may feel unloved (as in undifferentiated rejection), but outside observers may fail to detect any explicit indicators of rejection. Alternatively, observers may report a significant amount of 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 interpersonal acceptance-rejection is symbolic. Therefore, to understand why rejection has consistent effects on children and adults everywhere, 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 love-related behaviors if they wish to fully comprehend the acceptance-rejection process in those settings. That is, even though people everywhere may express 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. Individuals anywhere, for example, might praise or compliment another person, but the way 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).

At this point I should caution that in everyday American English the phrase "parental rejection" implies bad parenting and sometimes even bad people. In cross-cultural and multiethnic research (and in this chapter), however, one must attempt to view the word as being purely descriptive of parents' and others' behavior−not judgmental or evaluative. This is so because parents in about 25 percent of the world's societies behave normatively 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 interpersonal 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 by attachment figures—regardless of cultural, linguistic, racial, ethnic, gender, social class differences, or other such defining conditions. This issue is discussed next in the context of IPARTheory's personality subtheory.

IPARTheory's Personality Subtheory

As I said earlier, IPARTheory's personality subtheory attempts to predict and explain major personality or psychological—especially mental health-related—consequences of perceived interpersonal (especially parental) acceptance and rejection. The subtheory begins with the postulate that over the course of shared biocultural evolution, humans everywhere have developed the enduring, biologically-based emotional need for positive response from the people most important to them (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002; Leary, 1999; Rohner, 1975). 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 desire (consciously recognized or unrecognized) for intimacy, feeling close, and valued by the people with whom one has an affectional bond of attachment. As William James—the father of American psychology—once wrote in a letter to his psychology class, "the deepest principle of Human Nature is the CRAVING TO BE APPRECIATED" (James, 1920). 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 IPARTheory, 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 (Rohner, 2005a). In this sense, parents and intimate partners, for example, are generally significant others. But parents and intimate partners also tend to have one additional quality not shared by most significant others. That is, children's and adults' sense of emotional security and comfort tends to be dependent on the quality of their relationship with their significant others. Because of that fact, these people are usually the kind of significant other called *attachment figures* in both IPARTheory (Rohner, 2005a) and attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1982; Colin, 1996). The essence of the concept *attachment* as construed in IPARTheory is captured by a short poem that I wrote:

Attachment
The Emotional Moon Phenomenon
Sometimes I'm happy
Sometimes I'm blue
My mood all depends
On my relationship with you.

The poem's subtitle (The Emotional Moon Phenomenon) is meant to convey the idea that children's and adults' mood tends to be dependent to a significant degree on (i.e., tends to *reflect*) the emotional quality of their relationship with their attachment figures—just as the light of the moon is a reflection of (depends on) the rays of the sun. Parents are thus uniquely important to children because children's security and other emotional and psychological states are dependent on the quality of relationship with their parent(s). It is for this reason that parental acceptance and rejection is postulated in IPARTheory to have unparalleled influence in shaping children's personality development and psychological adjustment over time. Moreover, according to IPARTheory's personality subtheory, adults' sense of emotional security and well-being also tends to be dependent on the perceived quality of relationship with their intimate partners and other adult attachment figures. Thus, acceptance or rejection by an intimate partner is postulated to have a major influence on adults' personality and psychological adjustment.

The concept *personality* is defined in the personality subtheory (Rohner, 2005a) 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. IPARTheory's personality subtheory postulates that children's and adults' emotional need for positive response from significant others and attachment figures is a powerful and culturally *invariant* motivator. When children do not get this need satisfied adequately by their major caregivers—or adults do not get this need met by their adult attachment figures—they are predisposed to respond both emotionally and behaviorally in

specific ways. In particular—according to the subtheory—individuals who feel rejected by significant others are likely to be anxious and insecure. In an attempt to allay these feelings and to satisfy their emotional 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 3. 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 significant others. The term, as used in IPARTheory, also refers to the actual behavioral bids children and others 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.
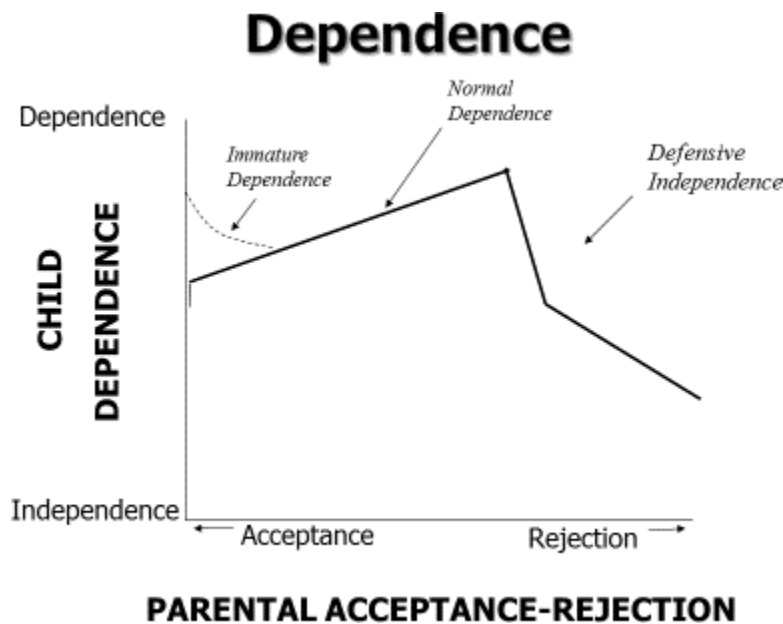

Figure 3. Dependence/independence in relation to interpersonal acceptance-rejection.

Dependence is construed as a continuum in IPARTheory, 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 IPARTheory, 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 by significant others. Many rejected children and adults feel the need for constant reassurance and emotional support.

That is particularly true of children who are immaturely dependent. *Immature dependence* is thought in IPARTheory to come about as a result of high levels of parental warmth and affection in combination with intrusive behavioral control (i.e., moment-by-moment control over and manipulation of a child's behavior). This style of parenting is likely to produce an especially noticeable spike in the dependency curve. That is, parents who continually say, in effect, "Oh, honey, don't do that. You might hurt yourself. Let mommy do it for you," are likely to reinforce children's dependency needs at the same time they interfere with the children's normal exploration and self-testing. These children often do not develop a full sense of age-appropriate competence, master, and a realistic sense of their own limits. The parent reinforces an infantilizing form of dependency. In IPARTheory, this form of parenting is sometimes called "smother love." This, in turn, may result in fear development and an emotionally needy child.

According to personality subtheory, parental rejection as well as rejection by other attachment figures also leads to other personality outcomes, in addition to anxiousness, insecurity, and dependence. These include anger, hostility, aggression, passive aggression, or psychological problems with the management of anger; emotional unresponsiveness; immature dependence or defensive independence depending on the form, frequency, duration, and intensity of perceived rejection; impaired self-esteem; impaired self-adequacy; emotional instability; and negative worldview. Theoretically these dispositions are expected to emerge because of the intense psychological distress produced by perceived rejection. More specifically, beyond a certain point— a point that varies from individual to individual— children and adults who experience significant interpersonal rejection are likely to feel ever-increasing anger, resentment, and other destructive emotions that may become intensely painful. As a result, many rejected individuals 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 people 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 (i.e., positive response) from the people most important to them, though they sometimes do not recognize it. Indeed, because of the overlay of anger, distrust, and other negative emotions generated by defensively independent people (especially beginning in adolescence) they often positively deny this need, saying in effect, "To hell with you! I don't need you. I don't need anybody!" This attitude is epitomized in the words to Simon and Garfunkel's classic folk song, "I Am a Rock":

> I've built walls
> A fortress deep and mighty
> That none may penetrate
> I have no need of friendship friendship causes pains
> It's laughter and it's loving I disdain
> I am a rock I am an island

Expressions of defensive independence such as this—with their associated emotions and behaviors— sometimes leads to a process of counter rejection, where children and others 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 IPARTheory'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 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. Figure 4 graphically displays some of the negative self-perceptions of seriously rejected individuals.
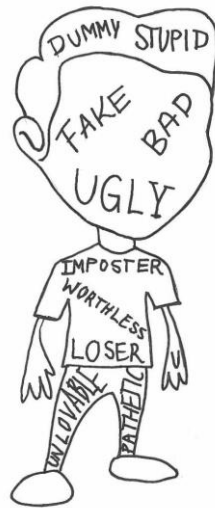
Figure 4. Common mental representations of self by many rejected individuals.

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 persons' capacity to deal effectively with stress. Because of this, children and adults who feel rejected often have problems with emotion regulation. That is, they tend to be less emotionally stable than children and adults who feel accepted. They often become emotionally upset—perhaps tearful or angry—when confronted with stressful situations that accepted (loved) individuals are able to handle with greater emotional equanimity. All these

acutely painful feelings associated with perceived rejection tend to induce rejected people to develop a negative worldview. That is, according to IPARTheory, 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 in other ways. 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) (Batool & Najam, 2009; Rohner, 1975, 1986). This issue is discussed more fully later in IPARTheory'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 children and adults as shown in Figure 4. In IPARTheory, the concept of *mental representation* (Rohner, 2005a) refers to an individual's more-or-less organized but usually implicit conception of 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 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, children's and adults' mental representations—cognitive schemas, or implicit theories as they are sometimes called—of self, of significant others, and of the world around them tend to induce them to seek or 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 individuals. For example, many rejected children and adults have a tendency to be hypersensitive to the possibility of being slighted, ignored, spurned, socially excluded, ostracized, or rejected in other ways. This is called *rejection sensitivity* (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Ibrahim et al, 2015; Rohner, Ali, & Molaver, 2019). Rejection sensitive people also have a tendency to perceive criticism or 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 individuals 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 avoid or mentally reinterpret situations that are inconsistent with these representations. Additionally, rejected individuals often construct mental images of personal relationships as being unpredictable, untrustworthy, and perhaps hurtful. These negative mental representations or negative schemas are often carried forward into new relationships where rejected children and adults develop a *fear of intimacy*—finding it difficult to trust others emotionally (Phillips et al., 2013; Rohner et al, 2019). Because of all this selective attention, selective perception, faulty styles of causal attribution, and distorted cognitive information-processing, rejected children are generally expected in IPARTheory to self-propel along qualitatively different developmental pathways from accepted or loved children.

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 individuals 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.

Neurobiological Correlates of Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection

The pain of perceived rejection is very real (MacDonald & Leary, 2005). In fact, brain imaging (*f*MRI) studies reveal that specific parts of the brain shown in Figure 5 tend to be activated when people feel rejected, just as they are when people experience physical pain (Eisenberger, 2012a, 2012b, 2015; Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004; Eisenberger et al., 2003; Karos, 2018. See also Ali, 2021; Squire & Stein, 2003).
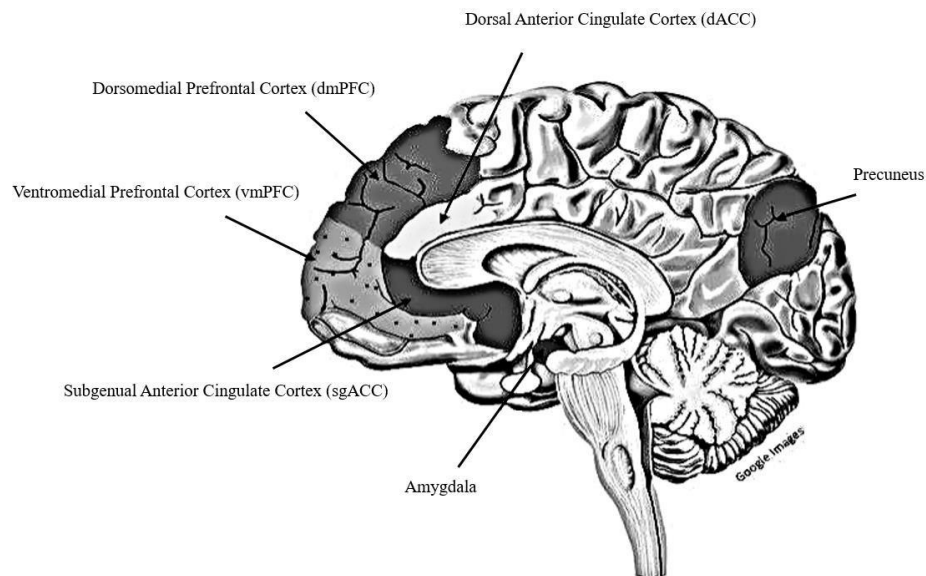
Figure 5. Regions of the brain associated with interpersonal rejection

Not only parental rejection in childhood but also peer rejection and perceived rejection by an intimate partner in adolescence and adulthood tend to be associated with activation in specific regions of the brain. For example, Lecce, Bianco, and Ronchi (2019) found that chronic exposure to peer rejection tends to alter neural brain regions implicated in cognitive control (i.e., the dorsal striatum and the lateral prefrontal cortex). Therefore, in order to regulate their behavior and emotions, people with a history of peer rejection have to exert greater effort to maintain emotional equilibrium than individuals with a history of peer acceptance. Moreover, Fisher, Aron, and Brown (2005) found in their fMRI study that

different regions of the brain are activated among adults who are happily in love versus those who had been recently rejected by their intimate partners.

In addition to research using fMRIs, 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 (a form of parental rejection) in childhood may be a significant risk factor for cerebral infarction (i.e., a stroke) 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 and adults' central nervous systems and psychosocial development. On the positive side, however, Luby et al. (2012) found that the early experience of maternal nurturance among preschoolers is strongly predictive of larger hippocampal volume among 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 that are essential for healthy social and emotional adjustment.

Longitudinal Studies and Twin Studies of Parental Acceptance-Rejection

Much of the empirical evidence described in this chapter suggests the strong likelihood that perceived rejection and other forms of emotional trauma in childhood and adulthood are *causally* linked to the effects of rejection specified in IPARTheory's personality subtheory and elsewhere. This evidence is augmented by longitudinal studies assessing relations between parenting and child development, and in the study of monozygotic twins. Regarding the latter, for example, Waller et al. (2018) found that six- to 11-year-old monozygotic twins who experienced more parental harshness (e.g., rejection) than their twin tended to be significantly more aggressive, and to have more callous-unemotional traits than their monozygotic siblings. The concept of callous-unemotional behaviors refers to traits where the child is unconcerned about the feelings of other people, has poor moral regulation, is deficient in empathy, and displays a persistent pattern of disregard for others. Monozygotic twins who experienced more parental warmth (acceptance) than their monozygotic sibling, however, displayed significantly less aggression, and had significantly fewer callous-unemotional traits. Studies such as this show that children's experiences of parental acceptance-rejection have a *direct* effect on children's personality dispositions, over and above genetically mediated effects.

Longitudinal studies also support the likely causality of the long-term effects of perceived or remembered parental acceptance-rejection. For example, a major seven-year longitudinal study of 1,315 7- through 14-year-old children from nine countries internationally, showed that in all countries, all four forms of both paternal and maternal rejection described earlier (i.e., parental coldness/lack of affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection) predicted children's internalizing and

externalizing behaviors across all ages (Rothenberg et al, 2021). Internalizing behaviors included emotions and behaviors such as anxiety, sadness, loneliness, self-consciousness, and nervousness. Externalizing behaviors, on the other hand, included such acts as lying, bullying, vandalism, disobedience, and physical violence.

An earlier longitudinal study followed participants for 35 years from age three through 38 (Reuben et al., 2016). There, the authors found that parental rejection and other forms of childhood adversity were strongly linked to an increased risk for later-life disease, poorer overall health, and poorer cognitive functioning. A 20-year longitudinal study of 1,176 adults (Leger et al., 2021) helps explain why the experience of interpersonal (especially parental) rejection is associated with the risk of developing illness and chronic health conditions, as well as an elevated risk of mortality. Though the authors did not consider interpersonal rejection per se, they did review the effects of several personality dispositions known to be universally associated with rejection. These include most particularly, emotional instability (one expression of neuroticism), and the disposition toward being hostile and angry. As noted earlier, both of these personality dispositions tend to be associated with prolonged and intense negative affect in the face of daily stressors. Over time, this heightened emotional reactivity to daily stress can damage physiological systems within the body. In turn, this damage leads to a greater susceptibility to disease and premature mortality. In that study, the authors found that emotional instability and other indicators of neuroticism—as partially mediated by negative emotional reactivity to daily stress—accounted for 25% of the variability in adults' chronic health conditions.

In an even earlier study, Carroll et al. (2013) followed a group of 756 18- through 30-year-old respondents for 15 years. The authors found that emotional and physical abuse in childhood, were associated with the risk for coronary artery problems in adulthood. Though not a longitudinal study, results of research by Ali, Rohner, Hoeft, and Britner (2021) is consistent with these results. That is, those authors found in a sample of 1,268 adults that 80% of the variance in the number of medical problems reported by respondents could be explained by their reports of parental acceptance-rejection in childhood. Specifically, the less parental acceptance respondents reported having experienced in childhood, the greater the number of medical problems they reported in adulthood (e.g., allergies, asthma, blood pressure problems, cancer, cardiovascular problems, irritable bowel syndrome, metabolic abnormalities, periodontal disease, and ulcers).

Here I should note, however, that Carroll et al. also found that the presence of at least one loving parent essentially eliminated the impact of abuse in childhood on the risk of later developing coronary artery problems. Chen, Kubzansky, and VanderWeele (2019) also found in their longitudinal study that adults' recollections of parental warmth and love in childhood were positively associated 10 years later with the adults' self-reports of emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Additionally, the authors found that parental warmth in childhood was negatively associated with adverse outcomes such as drug use and smoking.

It is no doubt for reasons such as these that hundreds of studies involving tens of thousands of children and adults cross-culturally—and among major American ethnic groups—consistently show that about 60% to 80% of the participants worldwide respond as personality subtheory predicts (Ki, et al., 2018). In fact, no adequate study anywhere in the

world—across cultures, genders, ages, geographic boundaries, ethnicities, and other defining conditions—has failed to show the same basic trend portrayed in Figure 6. That Figure graphically displays IPARTheory's postulates about expected relations between perceived parental acceptance- rejection and children's and adults' mental health status. More specifically, the Figure shows that—within a band of individual variation—children's and adults' mental health status (and often physical health) 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 IPARTheory; many are individuals (e.g. adults) who are or were in rejecting relationships with intimate partners or other attachment figures other than parents. This fact helps confirm IPARTheory's postulate that, for most people, perceived rejection by an attachment figure at any point in life can effectively compromise the likelihood of healthy social-emotional and physical functioning. However, it is also expected in IPARTheory that a minority of children and others will be able to thrive emotionally despite having experienced significant rejection by an attachment figure. As shown in Figure 6, these people are called *affective copers*. They are the focus of IPARTheory's coping subtheory discussed next.
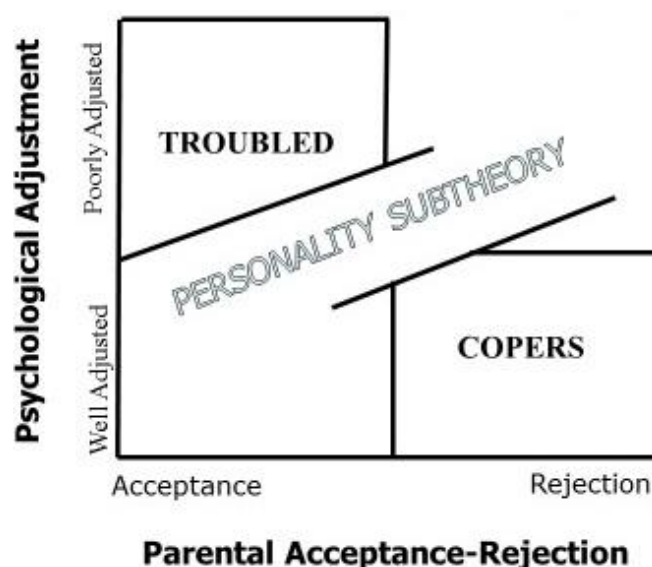

Figure 6. Copers and troubled individuals in relation to IPARTheory's Personality Subtheory

IPARTheory's Coping Subtheory

As I said earlier, IPARTheory's coping subtheory deals with the question of how some rejected children and adults are better able to withstand the corrosive drizzle of day-to-day rejection without suffering the negative mental health consequences that most rejected individuals do. It is important to note here that the concept *coper* in IPARTheory's coping subtheory refers to affective copers versus instrumental copers. *Affective copers* are those persons whose emotional and overall mental health is reasonably good despite having been raised in seriously rejecting families or despite being seriously rejected by other attachment figures throughout life. *Instrumental copers*, on the other hand, are rejected persons who do well in 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 having experienced serious rejection in childhood. Many prominent personalities in history have been instrumental copers. Included among them are such personages as the famous trumpet player and singer, Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong; the famous British philosopher, John Stuart Mill; the American President, Richard Nixon; the famous American writer and poet, Edgar Allen Poe; the former First Lady of the United States, Eleanor Roosevelt; the professional baseball player, Babe Ruth (Georger H. Ruth, Jr); the great American writer and humorist, Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens); and 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 in IPARTheory's personality subtheory.

Theoretically and empirically the affective coping process is the least well-developed portion of IPARTheory. As is true for most other bodies of research on the coping process (Ki, et al., 2018; Somerfield & McCrae, 2000; Tamres et al., 2002), 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 IPARTheory 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 other, 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 and adults being able to cope with perceived interpersonal rejection is enhanced by the presence of at least one warm, supportive, attachment figure in their life.

IPARTheory'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, 2005a). More specifically, coping subtheory expects that the capacity of children and adults to cope with rejection is enhanced to the degree that they have a clearly differentiated sense of self. The concept of differentiated sense of self (or, self-differentiation) refers in IPARTheory to the capability of individuals to (a) understand another person's feelings, thoughts, and motivations, and –crucially– (b) clearly distinguish or differentiate those dispositions from their own feelings, thoughts, and motivations, especially in emotionally close relationships. In effect, self-differentiation involves the ability to maintain psychological individuality in the context of emotionally intense relationships. Another attribute thought in the theory to help people cope more effectively with perceived rejection 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 are believed in IPARTheory to 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 believed in the theory to be provided with 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. This process is, of course, closely related to rejection sensitivity discussed earlier. Individuals who are able to depersonalize, however, have a psychological resource for dealing in a more positive way with inevitable ambiguities in interpersonal relationships. All three of these social cognitive capabilities are thought in IPARTheory to provide psychological shields against the more damaging effects of perceived rejection. However, these attributes themselves tend to be affected by rejection, especially rejection occurring during the formative years of childhood. This complicates the task of assessing the independent contribution that each attribute might make in helping children and adults cope with perceived interpersonal rejection.

Even though the mental health status of affective copers tends to be reasonably good, it is generally not as good as that of individuals coming from loving (accepting) families or in other emotionally satisfying relationships. But it does tend to be significantly better than that of most individuals coming from rejecting families or from seriously rejecting adolescent and adult relationships. 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 rejecting families of origin to help ameliorate the most damaging emotional, social, cognitive, and behavioral effects of perceived parental rejection. Thus, given the ordinary resilience characteristic of most people most of the time (Masten, 2001, 2014)—in combination with successful psychotherapy, positive work experiences, satisfying

intimate relationships, and other emotionally gratifying experiences—adults who were rejected in childhood are often better adjusted emotionally and psychologically than they were as children under the direct influence of rejecting parents. This is true even though they tend not to have a sense of well-being that is as positive as adults who felt loved all along. That is, important effects of rejection are apt to linger into adulthood, placing even affective copers at somewhat greater risk for social, physical, medical, and emotional problems throughout life than persons who were loved continuously. This is especially true if rejection experiences in childhood seriously compromised the adult's ability to form secure, trusting relationships with an intimate partner or other adult attachment figure.

The first empirical study to assess key features of the affective coping process was conducted by Ki (2015; Ki, et al., 2018). That study was based on 11,946 adults from 10 nations. Almost 17% of the respondents in the study reported having been seriously rejected in childhood by one or both parents. Nonetheless, 40% of the respondents fit the conceptual and operational definition of affective copers. According to Ki, significantly more women than men tended to be affective copers. At this point it is unclear why this gender difference exists, except that women everywhere appear to seek emotional support from other people more often than do men (Ki, et al, 2018; Tamres et al, 2002). Beyond that, it is worth noting that both male and female affective copers tend internationally to report significantly more maternal acceptance than paternal acceptance (Ki, 2015). However, male copers report experiencing significantly more maternal acceptance in childhood than do women, and female copers report experiencing more paternal acceptance in childhood than do men. Nonetheless, remembrances of both maternal and paternal acceptance in childhood tend to be significant and *independent* predictors of male copers' psychological adjustment in adulthood. For women, on the other hand, an interaction between remembered maternal and paternal acceptance in childhood are significant predictors of psychological adjustment. That is, female copers' remembrances of *paternal* acceptance in childhood tend to moderate the relation between remembered maternal rejection and women's psychological adjustment. Similarly, female copers' remembrances of *maternal* acceptance in childhood tend to moderate the relationship between remembered paternal rejection and women's adjustment. Alternatively stated, the psychological adjustment of female copers who experienced serious maternal rejection in childhood *improves* to the extent that they remember their fathers as having been a loving (accepting) parent. But under the condition of high paternal rejection in childhood, the intensity of the relation between remembered maternal rejection in childhood and female copers' psychological maladjustment *intensifies*. The same pattern appears when the moderator is maternal acceptance. The importance of fathers' love and probable reasons for it are amplified later in this chapter.

IPARTheory's Sociocultural Systems Model and Subtheory

As I noted earlier in the discussion of IPARTheory's multivariate model, interpersonal acceptance- rejection occurs in a complex ecological (familial, community, and sociocultural) context. IPARTheory's sociocultural-systems model shown in Figure 7 provides a way of

thinking about the antecedents, consequences, and other correlates of interpersonal acceptance-rejection within individuals and total societies. The model has its historical roots in the early work of Kardiner (1939, 1945a, 1945b), and later in the work of Whiting and Child (1953).
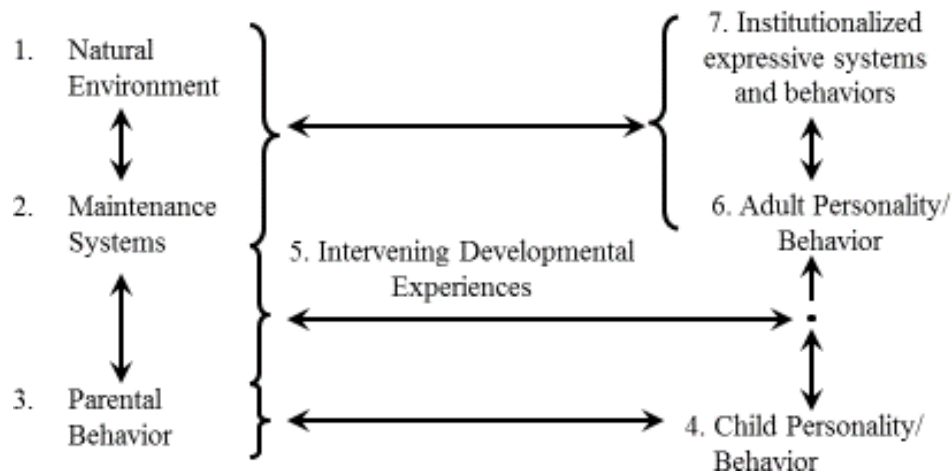

Figure 7. IPARTheory's Sociocultural-Systems Model

It also shares notable similarities with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) 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) toward their children 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 directly impact children's personality development and behavior (as postulated in personality subtheory).

The double-headed arrows in the model (designed to show a bidirectional flow 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 other 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).

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, to styles of humor, and to other such symbolic, mostly non-utilitarian, and non-survival related beliefs and behaviors. They are called "expressive" in

IPARTheory 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 the theory 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 haltingly—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 (such as religious traditions) 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, IPARTheory'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 et al., 1997; 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 children are typically 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 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 (Brown et al., 2015; 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). Hoarding, too, tends to be associated with adults' remembrances of the experience of childhood rejection (Brown, et al, 2015). Finally, styles of humor also tend to be associated with adults' remembrances of parental acceptance-rejection in childhood. Kazarian et al. (2010), for example, found that both men and women who remembered having been loved (accepted) in childhood by their both mothers and fathers tended to use affiliative and self-enhancing styles of humor, whereas adults who remembered having been rejected in childhood tended more to use aggressive and/or self-defeating styles of humor. *Affiliative humor* refers to humor that enhances one's relationships with others by engaging in spontaneous witty banter to amuse others, and to reduce interpersonal tension. *Self-enhancing humor* uses humor to regulate emotions and to cope with stress through a humorous outlook on life. *Aggressive humor*, on the other hand, involves the use of humor to enhance oneself at the expense of others through the use of sarcasm, ridicule, and "put-down" humor. Finally, *self-defeating humor* involves the use of humor to enhance relationships at the expense of oneself by means of self-disparaging humor. 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 IPARTheory's sociocultural systems subtheory. No single or simple response answers these questions, but specific factors noted below 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 social and 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). Other risk-factors such as family conflict and violence, parental substance abuse, and parental psychiatric disorder have also been shown to be significant predictors of children's and young adults' self-reports of parental rejection.

Paradigm Shift from Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (PARTheory) to Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection Theory (IPARTheory)

As I said earlier, IPARTheory initially focused exclusively on *parental* acceptance and rejection. At that time, it was called PARTheory. But in 1999 it went through a paradigm shift from parental to *interpersonal* acceptance and rejection. More specifically, one of the central postulates of what was earlier PARTheory 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, grandparent acceptance-rejection, acceptance-rejection in intimate adult relationships, supervisor acceptance-rejection, parent-in-law acceptance-rejection, and acceptance-rejection in other attachment relationships throughout the lifespan. Despite this paradigm shift in theory and research-focus, the theory continued to be known as PARTheory until 2014 because that label had

become so widely recognized internationally.

However, by 2014, overwhelming empirical evidence supported another of the theory's basic postulates that children and adults in many classes of relationships other than parent-child relationships understand themselves to be cared about (i.e., accepted or rejected) in the same four ways that children do in parent-child relationships. Additionally, evidence supported the postulate that individuals in these non-parental relationships tend to respond to perceptions of acceptance-rejection in the same way that children do when they perceive themselves to be accepted or rejected by their parents. In view of these facts, the name of the theory was officially changed to Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory) on June 25, 2014 (Rohner, 2014) at the 5th International Congress on Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection.

The first empirical study to test IPARTheory'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 adults' childhood. However, results of multiple regression analysis showed that partner acceptance was the strongest single predictor of Indian men's psychological adjustment, though this relation was partially mediated by remembered paternal (but not maternal) acceptance in childhood. For Indian women, on the other hand, both partner acceptance and remembrances of paternal (but not maternal) acceptance in childhood were approximately coequal as predictors of psychological adjustment.

More recently, similar findings were reported in eight other international studies including in Colombia and Puerto Rico (Ripoll-Nunez & Alvarez, 2008); Finland (Khaleque et al., 2008); India (Parmar & Rohner, 2008); Japan (Rohner, Uddin, Shamsunaher, & Khaleque, 2008); Korea (Chyung & Lee, 2008); Kuwait (Parmar et al., 2008); Turkey (Varan et al., 2008), and the USA (Rohner, Melendez, & Kraimer-Rickaby, 2008). Finally, a 2010 meta-analysis of 17 studies internationally (discussed later) showed that adults' perceptions of their intimate partners' acceptance tended in all countries to correlate strongly with the psychological adjustment of both men and women (Rohner & Khaleque, 2010). Collectively, this evidence suggests that adults' mental health status is probably universally linked to adults' perceptions of acceptance-rejection by their intimate partners as well as by remembrances of parental acceptance-rejection in childhood.

The second major issue to be studied following the reformulation of IPARTheory 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 IPARTheory, 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 U.S.

Multicultural studies have also shown that adults' remembrances of parental acceptance-rejection in childhood tend to be associated worldwide with other important developmental issues too. For example, a 13- nation study of adults' fear of intimacy (Rohner, Filus et al., 2019) showed that remembrance of both maternal and paternal rejection in childhood independently predicted men's and women's fear of intimacy in all 13 countries. However, remembered maternal rejection was more strongly related to adults' fear of intimacy than was remembered paternal rejection. Adults' psychological adjustment also partially mediated the relation between maternal and paternal rejection and both men's and women's fear of intimacy in all the countries. These results suggest the likelihood—as predicted in IPARTheory—that the experience of parental rejection in childhood leads to the form of psychological maladjustment known to be panculturally associated with rejection. In turn, this form of maladjustment tends to lead over time to the fear of intimacy in adolescence and adulthood.

The link between adults' remembrances of parental rejection in childhood and adults' subsequent psychological maladjustment is also associated with the development of loneliness in adulthood. The chain of effects was shown in two studies in six nations. In the first study, Putnick et al., (2021) found that remembered parental rejection in childhood was, as expected, associated with psychological maladjustment among young adult Bangladeshi men as well as women. In turn, psychological maladjustment was linked with feeling of loneliness among the men but not the women. Results of a second, five-nation study (Iraq, Italy, the Netherlands, Pakistan, and the U.S.), however, showed that remembrances of maternal and paternal rejection in childhood significantly and *independently* predicted feelings of loneliness among both men and women (Rohner, Putnick et al., 2019). But remembered *paternal* rejection was more strongly related to these feelings than were remembrances of *maternal* rejection. Psychological maladjustment fully mediated the effect of maternal rejection on loneliness, but only partially mediated the effect of remembered paternal rejection.

Finally, I should note that emerging evidence is beginning to show pancultural associations between adults' remembrances of parental acceptance-rejection in childhood and development of the disposition toward forgiveness and vengeance, as mediated by the

form of psychological (mal)adjustment known to be associated worldwide with the experience of parental acceptance-rejection. Research with a sample of 258 young Bangladeshi adults, for example, showed that positive psychological adjustment resulting from the experience of parental (both maternal and paternal) acceptance in childhood was strongly associated (beta =.65) with the disposition toward being forgiving, whereas the psychological maladjustment resulting from the experience of parental (both maternal and paternal) rejection in childhood was significantly (beta =.28) associated with the disposition toward being vengeful (Uddin et al., 2021).

A related study of 889 young adults in Pakistan (Butt, 2021) concluded that the effect of remembered parental acceptance in childhood on the disposition toward forgiveness, as mediated by psychological adjustment, was beta = .21. The effect of remembered parental rejection in childhood on the disposition toward vengeance, as mediated by psychological maladjustment was beta = .28.

Methods in IPARTheory Research

IPARTheory's six-decade program of research is guided methodologically by conceptual models called *anthroponomy* and the *universalist approach*, respectively (Rohner, 1986, 2005a; 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 IPARTheory 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 IPARTheory's postulates. These methods can be discussed in two clusters: quantitative psychological studies, and ethnographic studies. We deal first with the quantitative psychological studies.

Quantitative Psychological Studies

This cluster consists of two different classes of research. The first involves *quantitative psychological studies* using techniques such as interviews, behavior observations, and self-report questionnaires−most often the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ; Rohner, 2005b), and the Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ; Rohner & Khaleque, 2005b). These two questionnaires along with 31 others shown in Table 1−many of which

are available in approximately 67 languages or dialects worldwide—were developed to help researchers, practitioners, and others study issues of interpersonal acceptance-rejection.

1.	Best Friend Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (BFARQ)
2.	Coach Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (CARQ)
3.	Early Childhood Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (ECARQ)
4.	Early Childhood Best Friend Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (Early Childhood BFARQ)
5.	Early Childhood Teacher Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (ECARTQ)
6.	Elder Sibling Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (ESARCQ)
7.	Gender Inequality Scale (GIS)
8.	Grandparent Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (GARQ)
9.	In-Law Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (ILARQ)
10.	In-Law Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (ILAR/CQ)
11.	Intimate Adult Relationship Questionnaire (IARQ)
12.	Intimate Partner Attachment Questionnaire (IPAQ)
13.	Intimate Partner Attachment/Control Questionnaire (IPAQ/CQ)
14.	Intimate Partner Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (IPAR/CQ)
15.	Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Loneliness Scale (IPARLS)
16.	Interpersonal Relationship Anxiety Questionnaire (IRAQ)
17.	Interpersonal Rejection Sensitivity Scale (IRSS)
18.	Organizational Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (OARQ)
19.	Organizational Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (OARQ/CQ)
20.	Parental Acceptance-Rejection Interview Schedule (PARIS)
21.	Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ)
22.	Parental Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (PARQ/Control)
23.	Parent Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire/Control: Infant and Child (PARQIC)
24.	Parental Control Scale (PCS)
25.	Parental Power-Prestige Questionnaire (3PQ)
26.	Parent's Evaluation of Child's Conduct (PECC
27.	Personal Information Forms (PIF)
28.	Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ)
29.	Physical Punishment Questionnaire (PPQ)
30.	Substance Use Questionnaire (SUQ)
31.	Supervisor Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (SARQ)
32.	Teacher Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (TARQ)
33.	Teacher's Evaluation of Student's Conduct (TESC)

Table 1. Self-report measures used in IPARTheory research

Other measures are currently under development and will become available online after their reliability and validity have been empirically assessed. Extensive information about the reliability and validity of many of these measures and others for use internationally and among American ethnic groups is already available in the *Handbook for the Study of Parental Acceptance and Rejection* (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005a), and elsewhere (e.g., Gomez & Rohner, 2011, Martorell & Carrasco, 2014; and Senese et al, 2015). References to approximately 6,000 quantitative psychological studies using these and related measures may be found in Rohner (2021). There, interested students, researchers, and practitioners may do keyword searches to locate authors, articles, and books dealing with specific acceptance-rejection topics of special interest to them.

Meta-analyses are the second type of study in the quantitative psychological-studies

category. This type of study integrates, summarizes, and synthesizes results of a large assemblage of discrete psychological studies. Meta-analyses are used primarily to empirically test the basic tenets of a conceptual model or theory. As such, they are instrumental in helping confirm many of IPARTheory's central postulates about the universal effects and other correlates of interpersonal acceptance-rejection. For example, one postulate states that children and adults everywhere—regardless of differences in culture, gender, race, and other such defining characteristics— understand themselves to be cared-about (accepted) or not cared-about (rejected) in the same four ways. As noted earlier in this chapter, these ways include the perception of warmth/affection (or coldness/lack of affection), hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection. Collectively, these four expressions of interpersonal acceptance-rejection form the warmth dimension of interpersonal relationships. Thirteen meta-analyses involving over 150,000 children and adults on every continent except Antarctica have shown that people everywhere have little difficulty placing themselves on the warmth dimension, as defined by these four expressions of acceptance-rejection.

These same meta-analyses support another of IPARTheory's core postulates. That one states that children and adults everywhere tend to respond in the same seven to 10 ways when they experience themselves to be rejected by parents in childhood and by other attachment figures throughout life. In IPARTheory this is called the acceptance-rejection syndrome. Khaleque and Rohner's (2002a, 2011) meta-analyses confirm IPARTheory's postulate about the pancultural association between perceived parental acceptance and *overall psychological adjustment* of both children and adults. Other pancultural meta-analyses (e.g., Khaleque and Rohner, 2012b) confirm the theory's expectation that both perceived maternal and paternal acceptance in childhood reliably predict each of the seven personality dispositions of children and adults noted in the acceptance-rejection syndrome. This conclusion must be tempered, however, with the observation that even though adults' remembrances of *maternal* acceptance correlate panculturally with all seven dispositions, adults' remembrances of *paternal* acceptance do not correlate as expected with dependence—though adults' remembrances of paternal acceptance do correlate with the other six personality dispositions.

It is important to note that each of the four individual expressions of the warmth dimension (i.e., warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection) is also individually and transculturally associated with the overall psychological adjustment of both children and adults. Moreover, each of these experiences of acceptance-rejection tends to be predictive of each of the seven personality dispositions described in the acceptance-rejection syndrome (Ali, Khatun, Khaleque, & Rohner, 2019, 2020; Khaleque, 2013, 2015, 2017; Khaleque & Rohner, 2012*b*).

Beyond this, these meta-analyses confirm IPARTheory's postulate that perceptions of acceptance-rejection in other attachment relationships throughout life also affect children's and adults' psychological adjustment. Among adults, for example, Rohner and Khaleque (2010) found that perceived acceptance among intimate partners— along with adults' remembrances of paternal and maternal acceptance in childhood—transculturally predict the psychological adjustment of both men and women. Moreover, Ali, Khaleque, and Rohner

(2015*a*) showed that children's perceptions of teachers'—as well as parents'—accepting-rejecting behaviors are transculturally associated with children's overall psychological adjustment and school conduct. Additionally, the study showed that children's perceptions of teachers' acceptance has a significantly stronger effect on boys' school conduct than on girls' conduct.

Another of IPARTheory's postulates states that the psychological effects of parental acceptance-rejection in childhood tend to extend into adulthood and old age, though often in a less intense form than in childhood. This postulate finds support in Ali, Khatun, Khaleque, and Rohner's (2020) meta-analysis showing that perceived maternal undifferentiated rejection has a significantly stronger effect on children's overall psychological maladjustment that it does on adults' maladjustment.

Several of these meta-analyses also show that even though the love-related behaviors of both mothers and fathers have similar effects on offspring, the effects of one parent's behavior (i.e., fathers' versus mothers') sometimes have a significantly greater impact than the behavior of the other parent on one or both genders of offspring (i.e., sons versus daughters). For example, Ali, Khaleque, and Rohner (2015*b*) concluded that there are no significant gender differences in the relation between *children's* perceptions of maternal and paternal acceptance and children's psychological adjustment. But *adult sons'* remembrances of *maternal* acceptance in childhood are more closely tied to adult sons' than daughters' overall psychological adjustment. Moreover, *adult daughters'* remembrances of *paternal* acceptance in childhood tend to have significantly stronger relations with daughters' psychological adjustment than do daughters' remembrances of maternal acceptance.

Finally, Ali, Khatun, Khaleque, and Rohner (2019) found that maternal *undifferentiated rejection* has a significantly stronger relation with both children's and adults' overall psychological adjustment than does paternal undifferentiated rejection. Ali, Khatun, Khaleque, and Rohner (2021) also found that *maternal undifferentiated rejection* is more strongly linked to five of the seven indices of personality than is *paternal* undifferentiated rejection (i.e., dependence, negative self-esteem, emotional instability, emotional unresponsiveness, and negative worldview). Overall, results of all these meta-analyses offer strong support for the central postulates of IPARTheory's personality subtheory.

Ethnographic Research

The second cluster of distinctive methods used in IPARTheory 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 and Chaki-Sircar (1988) among women and children in a Bengali village. 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* (originally called the cross-cultural survey method) is the third approach within this cluster (Naroll et al., 1976; 1980; Whiting & Child, 1953). This method is a research design for statistically measuring relations 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 parental acceptance-rejection in 101 well-described non-industrial societies distributed widely throughout the major geographic regions and culture areas of the world illustrates this type of study.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Each 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 and powerful statistical procedures to be employed to tease out subtle effects. A typical weakness of these studies, however, is the fact that rich contextual data is usually missing. Special strengths of the methods in the ethnographic research cluster are ecological 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 pancultural sampling that takes into account the full range of known sociocultural variation throughout the world, especially of non-industrial societies. A weakness of these methods, however, is the fact that measures coded from ethnography are sometimes imprecise, and therefore may be low in reliability.

Further Evidence Supporting the Main Features of IPARTheory

Overwhelmingly, the most highly developed portion of IPARTheory is its personality subtheory. Evidence bearing on that subtheory comes from all five types of studies described above. The great majority of researchers internationally, however, have chosen to use the Parental Acceptance- Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ), the Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ), and other IPARTheory self-report measures shown earlier in Table 1 because of their robustness and simplicity. These measures have been used with many thousand children and adults on every continent except Antarctica. In fact, more evidence has been compiled from these studies than from studies using any other set

of measures. More than 300 studies in the Arab world alone attest to the robustness of the measures (Ahmed, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2021). Accordingly, results of these studies are given greatest attention here.

Virtually every competent study that has used these measures—regardless of ethnoracial, cultural, linguistic, geographic, economic, and other such variations—has reached the same conclusion. Specifically: The experience of interpersonal (especially parental) acceptance or rejection tends to be associated transculturally with the form of psychological adjustment (or maladjustment) postulated in personality subtheory. Khaleque and Rohner's (2002*a*) meta-analysis, for example, showed that 3,433 additional studies, all with nonsignificant results, would be required to disconfirm the conclusion that perceived parental acceptance-rejection in childhood is panculturally associated with *children's* psychological adjustment; 941 such studies would be required to disconfirm this conclusion among *adults.*

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 the variability in adults' adjustment is accounted for by perceived parental (paternal as well at maternal) acceptance-rejection alone. These results support IPARTheory's postulate 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. 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 social, cultural, behavioral, genetic, neurobiological, and other such factors are implicated in this variance (Reiss, 1997; Saudino, 1997; South & Jarnecke, 2015). Among these factors is a broad array of behaviors included in the concepts of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and psychological maltreatment. In fact, according to Green et al. (2010) and Teicher and Samson (2016), child adversity/maltreatment is linked to 45% of the preventable causes of psychopathology in childhood. This is because child maltreatment often alters trajectories of brain development (Teicher & Samson, 2016).

As I said above, three other classes of behavioral data also support the major postulates of IPARTheory'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 that conclusion, as does an 18-month ethnographic and quantitative psychological community study in West Bengal, India (Rohner & Chaki-Sircar, 1988). Moreover, a six-month ethnographic and quantitative 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 quantitative 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 the expected variations in youth's psychological adjustment.

The Acceptance-Rejection Syndrome

All this behavioral evidence about the 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 1,000 studies as of 2021 have shown that children and adults everywhere appear to organize their perceptions of interpersonal acceptance-rejection around the same four classes of behavior noted throughout this Chapter. Second, as observed earlier, cross-cultural and meta-analytic evidence supports the conclusion that children and adults who experience 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, they constitute a pattern or constellation of co-occurring behaviors, traits, and dispositions. Any single psychological disposition (e.g., anger or emotional instability) may be found in other conditions; it is the full configuration of dispositions that compose the syndrome. Collectively, all this evidence led Rohner and Lansford (2017) to postulate a *deep structure*—i.e., a biocultural co-evolutionary foundation—to the human affectional system.

Universal Health-Correlates of Perceived Parental Acceptance-Rejection

In addition to issues of overall psychological adjustment described in personality subtheory and in the acceptance-rejection syndrome, evidence also strongly implicates a number of other physical and mental health issues as likely universal correlates of perceived parental rejection. These include (1) a variety of *internalizing* problems such as depression and depressed affect, social withdrawal, and somatic symptoms without apparent medical cause. Other mental health-related issues include: (2) a variety of *externalizing* problems, such as truancy, delinquency, aggressive behavior, impulsive, disruptive behavior, and temper outbursts. Still other mental health-related issues likely to be universally associated with the experience of perceived parental rejection include (3) drug and alcohol abuse, (4) the development of a fear of intimacy, (5) development of rejection sensitivity, (6) the experience of loneliness in childhood and adulthood, 7) development of the disposition toward being vengeful, and (8) many others. Some of these issues appear to be direct effects of perceived interpersonal acceptance-rejection, and some appear to be more

indirect effects mediated by preexisting problems with psychological maladjustment of the type described in the acceptance-rejection syndrome.

Evidence regarding the probable universality of three of these topics is briefly amplified later. But first I should note that the experience of parental love (acceptance) in childhood may be universally associated with the development of the disposition toward forgiveness (being forgiving), and toward a large number of other prosocial behaviors such as generosity, empathy, helpfulness, positive peer relations, and an overall sense of well-being and life satisfaction—among others.

The experience of parental love (acceptance) in childhood also tends to be associated with a variety of physical-health benefits in both children and adults. These include lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol level, lower blood glucose level, and a lower incidence of serious medical problems such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, irritable bowel syndrome, and many other medical problems (Ali, Rohner, Hoeft, & Britner, 2021).

Behavior problems

As I said above, parental rejection and other forms of interpersonal rejection appear to be major predictors of almost all forms of externalizing problems, including conduct disorder, delinquency, and adult criminality. Cross-cultural findings that support this conclusion come from Bahrain, China, Croatia, Egypt, England, India, and Norway, among many other nations. Studies also support this conclusion among American ethnic groups, including African Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, and Hispanic Americans. Finally, a number of longitudinal studies in the U.S. (Ge et al., 1996; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Simons et al., 1989), and globally (Chen et al., 1997; Lansford et al., 2021; Rothenberg et al., 2021) show that parental rejection tends to *precede* the development of most of these externalizing problems. For example, Putnick et al. (2014) tested in a single developmental model within nine nations internationally, five indicators of child adjustment (i.e., internalizing and externalizing behaviors, school achievement, prosocial behavior, and social competence). Drawing a sample of 1,247 families in these nine countries this three-year longitudinal study found that children's perceptions of parental (both maternal and paternal) rejection uniquely (i.e., independently) predicted (1) increases in parents' reports of children's internalizing and externalizing behavior problems, as well as (2) poorer school performance, (3) decreases in prosocial behavior, and (4) poorer social competence. This study confirmed the more-or-less invariant effects of perceived acceptance-rejection across nations, and it showed that children's perceptions of paternal and maternal acceptance-rejection have roughly equivalent effects on children's adjustment and behavior.

Depression

Parental rejection and other forms of interpersonal rejection have consistently been found to be related to both clinical and non-clinical depression and to depressed affect within major ethnic groups in the United States, including African Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, and Hispanic Americans. In addition, perceived rejection has been found to be linked with depression in many countries worldwide, including Australia, China (Chen,

Rubin, & Li, 1995), Egypt, Germany (Richter, 1994), Hungary, Italy, Sweden, Turkey, and elsewhere. Very importantly, a number of longitudinal studies show that perceived parental rejection in childhood tends to *precede* the development of depressive symptoms in adolescence and adulthood (e.g., Chen, Rubin & Li, 1995; Ge et al., 1996; Ge et al., 1994; Peterson et al., 1991).

Substance abuse

Support for the worldwide association between parental acceptance-rejection and substance abuse comes from studies conducted in many countries, including Australia (Rosenberg, 1971), Canada, England, the Netherlands, Pakistan, and Sweden. 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 American ethnic groups, including among African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans. 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.

Interestingly, several studies have concluded that adults' remembrances of paternal rejection in childhood are a significantly better predictor of substance abuse than are adults' remembrances of maternal rejection. For example, Butt, Watson, Rohner, & Malik (2021) found that remembered paternal rejection among 960 men in Pakistan—along with the form of psychological maladjustment produced by rejection—distinguished substance abusers from non-abusers with 97.3% accuracy. These results are consistent with results of research reported by Campo and Rohner (1992) who found in an American sample of 40 substance abusers and 40 non-abusers that adults' remembrances of both paternal and maternal rejection and psychological maladjustment distinguished substance abusers from non-abusers with 87.5% accuracy. Adding the demographic variable of education level to the model raised the jackknifed classification accuracy to 91.2%, yielding only seven misclassifications in the total sample of 80 volunteers. Remembrances of paternal rejection, however, was a significantly better predictor than were remembrances of maternal rejection among the abusers. Other issues regarding the significance of fathers' versus mothers' love are discussed next.

The Importance of Father Love

Substantial evidence in the quantitative psychological studies paradigm suggests that children's and adults' perceptions of their fathers' love (acceptance-rejection) is often as strongly implicated as their perceptions of 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 (Li & Meier, 2017; Rohner, 1998; Rohner & Veneziano, 2001; Veneziano, 2000, 2003). Studies supporting this conclusion tend to deal with the following issues among children, adolescents, and adults: (1) personality and psychological adjustment problems

(Ahmed et al., 2012; Amato, 1994; Dominy et al., 2000; Khaleque & Rohner, 2011a; (2) mental illness (Akun, 2017; Barrera & Garrison-Jones, 1992; (3) psychological health and well-being (Amato, 1994); (4) conduct disorder (Eron et al., 1961; Putnick et al., 2014); (5) substance abuse (Brook & Brook, 1988; Emmelkamp & Heeres, 1988); (6) delinquency (Andry, 1962); (7) prosocial behavior (Putnick et al., 2014, 2021); (8) children's social competence (Putnick et al., 2014, 2021); and, (9) school performance (Putnick et al., 2014, 2021).

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 et al., 2012; Carrasco & Rohner, 2012; Rohner & Carrasco, 2014; 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 et al., 1992; Bartle et al., 1989; Dickie et al., 1997); (2) conduct and delinquency problems (Kroupa, 1988); and (3) substance abuse (Brook et al., 1981; Eldred et al., 1974).

Many new studies have begun to report differential effects of perceived paternal versus maternal acceptance on the psychological adjustment of daughters versus sons. For example, Sultana and Khaleque (2015) found that whereas both maternal and paternal acceptance made significant and independent contributions to the adjustment of adult sons, only remembrances of paternal acceptance in childhood made a significant and independent contribution to adult daughters' adjustment.

Substantial evidence is also beginning to show that genetic influences on mental health differ as a function of environmental risk factors such as rejecting parent-child relationships. For example, South and Jarnecke (2015) reported from a nationwide study of twins that adults' remembrances of their fathers' discipline (punishment and behavioral control) and affection moderated genetic and environmental influences on internalizing symptoms of the adults. More specifically, heritability was greatest at the highest levels of paternal affection and discipline. Adults' remembrances of their fathers' affection in childhood also moderated etiological influences on adults' problems with the use of alcohol. In this context heritability was greatest at the lowest levels of paternal affection. No moderating effects were found for mothers.

From all this evidence it is now clear that paternal acceptance or rejection is sometimes a better predictor of offspring's psychological and behavioral adjustment than is maternal acceptance or rejection. But until recently it was not clear why this is true. Conclusions reached in a recent study of offspring's (children's and young adults') perceptions of each parent's prestige (i.e., esteem) and interpersonal power within the family (Rohner & Carrasco, 2014) help to explain why the love-related behavior of one parent (e.g., fathers) sometimes has a significantly greater impact on offspring's psychological adjustment than does the love-related behavior of the other parent (e.g., mothers). Results of research within

the 11 nations in that study revealed that the love-related behaviors of both parents tended in most countries to make unique (i.e., independent) contributions to the psychological adjustment of both sons and daughters. That fact notwithstanding, results of analyses also showed that in many instances offspring's perceptions of one parent's (e.g., fathers') *interpersonal power* and/or *prestige* within the family tended to *moderate* the relation between perceived parental (maternal and/or paternal) acceptance and offspring's psychological adjustment. That is, the strength of the relation between parental (maternal and paternal) acceptance and offspring's psychological adjustment was often changed by the offspring's perceptions of the parent's power or prestige within the family. It is important to note that *interpersonal power* here refers to the ability of one person to influence the opinion and behavior of others. It is different from *authority,* which is institutionalized power given to individuals because of their formal status in a family, group, or society. Interpersonal power, however, emerges only through informal interactions between two or more individuals within the family or other small group. Generally, no two individuals within a family share the same amount of either interpersonal power or prestige. Consequently, family members and members of other small groups can usually be ranked in terms of both interpersonal power and prestige—but the two sources of influence within the family are often significantly correlated (Rohner, 2014)

The study of 785 college students in Portugal illustrates this phenomenon (Machado et al., 2014). There the authors found that both men's and women's remembrances of maternal and paternal acceptance in childhood made independent contributions to the psychological adjustment of the young adults. But the magnitude of the relation between perceived paternal acceptance and *daughters'* adjustment intensified significantly the more *interpersonal power* fathers were perceived to have relative to mothers. The magnitude of the relation between perceived paternal acceptance and *sons'* adjustment, however, intensified the more *prestige* fathers were perceived to have relative to mothers.

Ethics and Research in IPARTheory

The search in IPARTheory for panculturally valid *principles* of behavior is based on the assumption from ethics that with a scientific understanding of the worldwide consequences, antecedents, and other correlates of interpersonal 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, policies, and interventions in that it asks researchers and practitioners to look beyond differences in cultural beliefs, language, and custom when making assessments about the adequacy of parenting, and to focus instead on whether children's fundamental needs for emotional support, nurturance, affection, and the like are 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 or discriminatory 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 IPARTheory—the most important criteria to be used to evaluate the adequacy of parenting and other interpersonal relationships in that group. Rather, the most important question becomes how accepted and cared-about do children and others *perceive* themselves to be. Insofar as children and adults perceive their parents and other attachment figures to be accepting, then—according to both theory and evidence presented here—it often makes relatively little difference for children's developmental outcome how external reporters view parents' behavior.

IPARTheory's Eight Basic Postulates

It is thoughts such as these that have motivated a great part of IPARTheory research. Now, after six decades of research with several hundred thousand children, adolescents, and adults in a great many countries worldwide, and with members of every major American ethnic group, it seems safe to conclude that *IPARTheory's eight basic postulates* find nearly universal support. As noted earlier, some postulates have more evidence supporting them than others. More specifically, the *first postulate* states that over the course of shared biocultural evolution, humans everywhere have developed the enduring, biologically-based emotional need for positive response (acceptance) from the people most important to them. This postulate cannot be empirically proven, of course, but it appears plausible given the near invariance transculturally of the same negative responses by children and others to feelings of rejection by attachment figures and significant others throughout life.

The *second postulate* states that children and adults everywhere—regardless of differences in culture, gender, race, and other such defining characteristics—understand themselves to be cared-about (accepted) or not cared-about (rejected) in the same four ways. In IPARTheory this is called the warmth dimension of parenting and of other interpersonal relationships. Evidence further supporting this postulate is provided by the work of McNeely and Barber (2010) who asked 4,300 adolescents in 12 nations (from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, the Middle East, and North and South America), to respond to the following question: "Please list the specific things that your parents/caregivers do that make you feel like they love you?" Responses to this query confirmed that adolescents themselves in all cultures studied perceived aspects of emotional support (e.g., expressing affection and encouragement, and the absence of parental hostility or parental aggression) as being expressions of parental love or acceptance. Ultimately, more than the four universal expressions of parental acceptance-rejection postulated in IPARTheory may be identified, but if they exist they are currently unknown.

The *third postulate* that is overwhelmingly supported in IPARTheory's personality subtheory states that children and adults everywhere tend to respond in the same seven to ten (or more) ways when they experience themselves to be rejected by parents in childhood and by other attachment figures throughout life. In IPARTheory, this is called the acceptance-rejection syndrome. Related to this is IPARTheory's *fourth postulate* stating that the psychological effects of parental acceptance-rejection in childhood tend to extend into

adulthood and old age, though often in a less intense form than in childhood. Differences in culture, ethnicity, social class, race, gender, and other such factors do not exert enough influence to override these apparently neurobiologically-based tendencies. Having said this, however, I must also stress that the association between perceived acceptance-rejection and psychological and behavioral outcomes for youth and adults is far from perfect. Indeed, approximately 74% or more of the variation in youth's and adults' psychological and behavioral adjustment is yet to be accounted for by behavior-genetic, neurobiological, sociocultural, and other such factors. Nonetheless, results of research are so robust and stable the world over that many professionals now feel confident developing policies, interventions, treatment programs, and practice-applications based on IPARTheory's central postulates and evidence—especially postulates surrounding IPARTheory's personality subtheory. This point is amplified later.

The *fifth postulate* in IPARTheory states that children's *perceptions* of fathers' love-related (accepting- rejecting) behaviors, and adults' *remembrances* of these behaviors from childhood often have as great or greater impact on children's emotional, social, behavioral, and cognitive development than do children's or adults' perceptions/remembrances of mothers' love-related behaviors. Even though a great deal of research now supports this postulate, much more work must be done to explain *why* this is true, and to explain the conditions under which the impact of fathers' love is sometimes greater than the impact of mothers' love. Of course, it is also true that the impact of mothers' love is sometimes greater than the impact of fathers' love, and often there is no significant difference in the impact of one parent's love versus the other parent's love.

Despite the tendency for children and adults in all societies to respond in the same ways to the experience of parental rejection in childhood, there is significant individual variation among individuals in the extent to which they tend to respond. This is because, as stated in IPARTheory's *sixth postulate*, some children and adults are better able than others to deal emotionally with the effects of interpersonal (especially parental) rejection. These people are called affective copers in the theory. It remains a task for future research to identify the most important factors associated with children's and adults' ability to affectively cope reasonably well with the almost inevitable hurt of rejection. This is a critical task, however, because with this knowledge it should be possible—through clinical treatment and other interventions—to help rejected children and others become better-able to deal with the effects of perceived rejection.

The last two postulates in IPARTheory deal with very different issues. The *seventh postulate*, for example, deals with personal and contextual conditions under which parents around the world are likely to be loving (accepting) or less-than-loving (rejecting). The postulate states that specific psychological, familial, community, and sociocultural factors tend to be associated worldwide with specific variations in the tendency of parents to be accepting or rejecting. Here the sociocultural systems model discussed earlier in this chapter helps guide the work of IPARTheory researchers and practitioners. As described earlier in this chapter, and as graphically suggested in IPARTheory's sociocultural systems model (see Figure 6), substantial empirical evidence supports the theory's *eighth postulate* which states that the experience of parental acceptance-rejection in childhood tends to reliably

predict expressive behaviors and beliefs of adults within a society (e.g., religious beliefs, artistic preferences and traditions, styles of humor, and other expressive behaviors).

Two Practical Applications of IPARTheory and Measures

IPARTheory and measures are used worldwide in a growing number of applied contexts such as mental health clinics, the courts, school systems, parent-education programs, protective services agencies, and similar settings. Here I briefly summarize applications in two of these contexts--in clinical settings, and in the context of empirically assessing parental alienation for clinicians, the courts, and protective services agencies.

Clinical Applications of IPARTheory and Measures

IPARTheory concepts, measures, and/or evidence have been incorporated worldwide into the work of clinicians with very different clinical perspectives. These perspectives include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR), Holistic Counseling, Interpersonal Therapy (IPT), Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT), Microcounseling, Psychodynamic Therapy, and Schema Therapy, among others. So far, the most highly developed evidence-based IPARTheory-related clinical approach was created by Rigazio-Digilio and Rohner (2008, 2015). Those authors developed and tested an interactive assessment and treatment protocol for use in relational therapy. It is based on a clinical translation of IPARTheory concepts and measures. The authors also supervised a successful study that examined the way in which the protocol informed collaborative assessment, treatment planning, and evaluation when working with couples who had personal (e.g., emotional) problems or interpersonal difficulties associated with rejection by an intimate partner and/or parental rejection in childhood.

More recently, Rising and Rohner (2021) created an online, open-access book on *Recovery From Rejection: A Manual of Client Handouts for Clinical Practice***.** The Manual is available for use by clinicians, researchers, and other professionals in English, German, Persian, and Turkish. It is now being translated into Arabic, Czech, Dutch, French, Italian, Spanish, Urdu, and perhaps other languages as well.

Assessing Parental Alienation for Clinicians, the Courts, and Protective Services Agencies

Parental alienation occurs when children ally themselves totally with one parent and refuse to have contact with (i.e., to reject) the other parent without legitimate justification. Alienation is to be distinguished from *parental estrangement,* where children reject or refuse to have contact with that parent for good cause such as a history of abuse or neglect. Parental alienation generally occurs in the context of high conflict divorce or separation where one parent pits the child against the other parent. It is essential in both clinical and forensic evaluation for family-law practitioners, court-appointed professionals, clinicians, and other others to be able to clearly distinguish unjustified parental alienation from justified parental estrangement.

In an effort to help implement this task effectively, Bernet, Gregory, Reay, and Rohner (2018), and Bernet, Gregory, Rohner, and Reay (2020) developed a technique using the mother and father forms of the Adult PARQ to help distinguish parental alienation from parental estrangement and other forms of malparenting. In the Bernet et al. (2020) study, this technique distinguished with 99% accuracy severely alienated children from non-alienated children. Because of this unusual success rate, scores of psychologists, family-law practitioners, social workers, and other professionals in many countries are now using the mother and father PARQs in their clinical and court-related work dealing with parental alienation. Some professionals are beginning to use the Child PAQ as well.

IPARTheory's Place in the History of Research on Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection

The empirical study of interpersonal—especially parental—acceptance-rejection has a long 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 6,000 studies are available on the topic (Rohner, 2021). 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 et al., 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 et al., 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 IPARTheory and associated measures in the 1970s and 1980s grew directly out of these 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 parental acceptance-rejection have also evolved, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, but also extending well into the 21st century. Five of these programs in the U.S. 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 measures and research designs (e.g., Amato & Booth 1997; Amato & Fowler, 2002; Barber & Thomas, 1986; Peterson & Rollins, 1987; Whitbeck et al., 1993; Young et al., 1995).

Another seminal 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 are Maccoby and Martin (1983) and Steinberg and colleagues (e.g., Glasgow et al., 1997; Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Lamborn et al., 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 universally produces the most competent and healthy children (Garcia, 2015; Garcia & Garcia, 2009; 2010; Garcia et al., 2019; Queiroz et al., 2020). Increasingly, doubt is also 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 internationally.

A third notable program of research comes from the work of Downey, Feldman, and colleagues (e.g., Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey, Khouri, & Feldman, 1997; Feldman & Downey, 1994; Ibrahim et al., 2015; Zimmer-Gembeck & Nesdale, 2013). 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, readily perceive, and 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. Most of these conclusions have been confirmed in IPARTheory's program of international research (Rohner, Ali, Senese, & Filus, 2021).

Yet another innovative program of research was established by K.D. Williams (2001, 2007, 2011) and associates in social psychology. Researchers in this program experimentally study issues surrounding ostracism, social exclusion, rejection, bullying, and

similar behaviors (e.g., Hartgerink et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2005; Zadro et al., 2004). These researchers use the "cyberball" technique—an experimental, computerized ball-tossing game where participants are led to believe they are playing with two other players who can toss the ball to anyone in the game. Target participants are included in the game for a set number of minutes, but then they are excluded by the other two players for the remainder of the game. This simple task and short period of ostracism tends to produce sharp feelings of emotional pain in ostracized players. It also tends to be associated with anger, sadness, decreased self-esteem, and other emotional and behavioral consequences known in IPARTheory to be associated with more pervasive interpersonal rejection, including parental rejection.

Finally—as noted earlier—a productive 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. The research shows clearly that the emotional pain associated with perceived rejection is no mere epiphenomenon, but rather has a measurable impact by itself on the physical, psychological, and social development of children and adults (e.g., Eisenberger, 2015; MacDonald & Jensen-Campbell, 2011; Van Harmelen, et al, 2010).

All these bodies of work, except Rohner's, focus heavily—though not exclusively—on European Americans. However, at least three important programs of international acceptance-rejection research also exist. First, with the construction and validation of a self-report questionnaire called—in English—the EMBU (Perris, Jacobsson, Lindstrvm, von Knorring, & Perris, 1980), Perris, Emmelkamp, and others launched a productive European and cross-cultural comparative program of research on the psychological effects of parental acceptance-rejection (Arrindell et al., 1998; Emmelkamp & Hecrus, 1988; Penelo et al., 2012; 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 et al., 1979; Torgersen, & Alnaes, 1992). Finally, beginning in the 1990's Chen and colleagues have developed 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, Hastings, Rubin, Chen, Cen, & Stewart, 1998; Chen, Liu, & Li, 2000; Chen, Wu, Chen, Wang, & Cen, 2001; Zhao et al., 2015). Among these programs of research on interpersonal acceptance-rejection, the work of Rohner and colleagues—drawing initially from PARTheory and now from IPARTheory and its associated measures—is best known internationally and is the most highly developed.

Origin of IPARTheory: A Personal History[1]

My work on interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPARTheory) started in 1959-1960, my first year in graduate school at Stanford University. At that time, I had no thought that the work would eventually mature into a full-blown evidence-based theory. In fact, it started solely as the fulfillment of a class assignment in a course on Culture and Personality. The assignment was to do a cross-cultural survey using what is now called the holocultural method, where a worldwide sample of ethnographies is coded for specific variables of interest. Statistical tests are then run to see if the variables are correlated panculturally, as hypothesized by the investigator. In my case, I did not have any ideas about what variables to code or what statistical relationships to test. So, I leafed through one of my favorite textbooks from two years earlier when I had been an undergraduate psychology major at the University of Oregon. I hoped to find a suitable topic in Coleman's (1956) *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*. Right away I found a statement asserting that:

> *"In general ... rejected children tend to be fearful, insecure, attention-seeking, jealous, hostile, and lonely (Wolberg). Many of these children have difficulty in later life expressing and responding to affection. Probably all conditions of rejection are conducive to self-devaluation and to an evaluation of the world as an insecure and dangerous place, thus inhibiting normal spontaneity and the confident reality testing essential for normal development"* (Coleman, 1956, p. 117).

Just before reading these statements, I had completed a year of work in Morocco. I had gone to that North African country as a universalist—believing that everything I had learned in psychology as an undergraduate (including the conclusions drawn by Coleman) was probably true for humans everywhere. Because of my life-changing experiences in Morocco, I returned to the U.S. a year later as a relativist—believing that little of what I had learned in psychology was universally true. Rather, most of it was—in my mind at that time— culturally relative. This conviction led me to seek a PhD. in sociocultural anthropology (with a focus on psychological anthropology), not in psychology per se as I had originally planned.

Now, as a relativist in my first semester of graduate school, I thought the course assignment would provide an opportunity for me to show how culture-bound psychology really was, as revealed by Coleman's assertions regarding the apparently universal effects of parental rejection on children's psychological development. So, I set about coding ethnographic descriptions of parental acceptance-rejection and children's personality dispositions in a small world-sample of societies as described by anthropologists. After doing my data analysis, I was stunned to discover that some of what Coleman said appeared to be universally true, and some of it was not. For reasons that I cannot explain even today—

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[1] Adapted from Rohner (2016)

more than six decades later—the results of that small, inconclusive study so captured my attention and interest that I wound up pursuing the topic of interpersonal acceptance-rejection (especially parental acceptance-rejection) for the remainder of my professional career.

Five years and several acceptance-rejection studies later, I left Stanford to come to the University of Connecticut (UConn) as an Assistant Professor. Here, I began the Rejection-Acceptance Project. That work involved extending and expanding codes on ethnographers' descriptions of parental acceptance-rejection, along with ethnographers' descriptions of children's and adults' personality dispositions in 101 (and later 186) non-industrial societies. In effect this was an extension of my first study as a graduate student. It led in 1975 to the publication of *They Love Me, They Love Me Not* (Rohner, 1975). Prior to the publication of that book, however, I took a leave of absence from UConn for two years to become a Senior Scientist in the Boy's Town Center for the Study of Youth Development at the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. While at Boy's Town Center from 1973-1975 I developed and validated the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire and the Personality Assessment Questionnaire in order to be able to do intracultural research that mirrored the cross-cultural survey (holocultural) research that I had been working on in prior years.

Finally, after doing a number of intracultural studies in the Washington D.C. area and internationally—and after confirming intraculturally my cross-cultural findings about the effects of parental acceptance-rejection and other correlates of acceptance-rejection, Evelyn Rohner and I co-edited in 1980 a Special Issue of *Behavior Science Research* (now *Cross-Cultural Research*) on "Worldwide Tests of Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory" (Rohner & Rohner, 1980). This was the first published use of the phrase Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (PARTheory, often called PART or PAR Theory at that time). The term PARTheory stuck until I officially changed it to IPARTheory in 2014 (Rohner, 2014). The name was changed because in 1999 I came to realize that most of the central postulates in PARTheory probably generalized to all important attachment relationships throughout the lifespan. But because PARTheory/IPARTheory is an evidence-based theory I did not want to change the theory's name until we had accumulated sufficient evidence to warrant doing so.

Abdul Khaleque did the first empirical study beyond parent-child relations. His UConn Master's thesis (Khaleque, 2001) on intimate adult relationships was completed in 2001. (But he had already received a PhD. in 1988.) He and I revised and published his thesis in the 2008 special issue of *Cross-Cultural Research* on "Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory Studies of Intimate Adult Relationships" (Rohner & Melendez, 2008). As an increasingly large volume of research was done nationally and internationally on different classes of interpersonal relationships worldwide, it became clear over the next several years that the major postulates of PARTheory worked panculturally and in almost all forms of attachment relationships throughout the life span. That's what motivated me in June, 2014 to formally change the name of the theory to IPARTheory. And the rest, as they say, is history.

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Audio/Visual Resources for IPARTheory

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Discussion Questions

1. How do expressions of interpersonal acceptance and rejection (including parental acceptance-rejection) differ cross-culturally and in different ethnic groups? For example, think about different ways that people express warmth and affection cross-culturally.

2. With reference to this chapter, explain how parents give children a sense of who they are, and why that is important.

3. How would you summarize information about the importance of interpersonal acceptance-rejection in an accessible way to an audience of non-psychologists?

4. What kind of relationship (in terms of acceptance-rejection) did you have with your own parents or primary caregivers when you were young? What bearing do you think that had on who you are today?

5. What practical (e.g., prevention, intervention, or treatment) implications do you see in the fact that perceived interpersonal acceptance-rejection has consistent effects on humans in all societies and ethnic groups of the world?

6. Why is anthroponomy and the universalist approach—or something like it—needed to confirm the existence of universals in human behavior?

7. Why does perceived rejection by one's intimate adult partner (or by other attachment figures) generally have the same psychological effects as perceived parental rejection in childhood? In other words, what psychological, neurobiological, biochemical, or other processes seem to be at work here?

8. Select any widely known theory of personality (e.g., psychodynamic, social learning, humanistic, existential), and explain how it would deal with the phenomenon of parental rejection. How is that like and different from the way in which IPARTheory deals with it?

About the Author

Ronald P. Rohner is Professor Emeritus of Human Development and Family Studies and Anthropology at the University of Connecticut Storrs, USA. He is also the founding President and Executive Director of the International Society for Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection. Moreover, he is author of interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory, along with most of the measures used to empirically test the theory. As a result of his lifetime commitment to cross-cultural research, he received the *American Psychological Association Award for Distinguished Contributions to the International Advancement of Psychology.* He also received the Outstanding International Psychologist Award from the USA for 2008.