

NEW PATHS FOR ACCEPTANCE

NEW PATHS FOR ACCEPTANCE
OPENING AWARENESS IN
INTERPERSONAL ACCEPTANCE-REJECTION

Edited by

MÁRCIA MACHADO & FRANCISCO MACHADO



BrownWalker Press
Boca Raton

*New Paths for Acceptance:
Opening Awareness in Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection*

Copyright © 2015 International Society for Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher.

BrownWalker Press
Boca Raton, Florida
USA • 2015

ISBN-10: 1-62734-556-6
ISBN-13: 978-1-62734-556-9

www.brownwalker.com

Cover image by galdzer/Bigstock.com

To Ron and Nancy

CONTENTS

List of Contributors	IX
Introduction.....	XI

PART I: CHILDHOOD/PARENTAL ALIENATION

Parental Alienation, Child Psychological Abuse, and Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory <i>William Bernet</i>	15
Parental Alienation: Conditional Love and Forced Rejection <i>Lena Hellblom Sjögren</i>	25

PART II: ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULTS

An Analysis of Fatherhood and Masculinity in Pakistan as Perceived by Adolescents <i>Syeda Sanobar Rizvi</i>	47
Mothers', Fathers' Siblings', and Intimate Partners' Acceptance: Its Relationship to Psychological Adjustment <i>Parminder Parmar</i>	61
Locus of Control, Perceived Parental Acceptance and Psychological Adjustment of Bangladeshi Students <i>Shaila Khan</i>	69
Peer and Teacher Acceptance and Academic Self-efficacy: An Iberian Study <i>Nuno Baptista, Francisco Machado & Márcia Machado</i>	83
Kuwaiti Adolescents' and Young Adults' Perceptions of Parental Power/Prestige, Parental Acceptance-Rejection and Psychological Adjustment <i>Ramadan A. Ahmed & Masoumah A. Ibrahim</i>	93

PART III: ADULTHOOD

Living in the Moment: The Predictive Role of Perceived Parental Rejection in Women's Mindfulness <i>Carrie M. Brown</i>	113
Acceptance and Rejection Experiences of Men: Disclosures in Integrated Psychotherapy <i>Karuna Thakur & Anisha Shah</i>	121

PART IV: METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Parental Perceptions About the Behavior of Their Children (PECC) Instrument: Psychometric Properties <i>Artemis Giotsa & Anna K. Touloumakos</i>	139
The Validity and Reliability of the Adult Parental Power/Prestige Questionnaire (3PQ) <i>Julian Lloyd</i>	149

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Ramadan A. Ahmed - College of Social Sciences, Kuwait University, Kuwait

Nuno Baptista – Maia University Institute (ISMAI), Portugal

William Bernet - Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Carrie M. Brown - Agnes Scott College, USA

Artemis Giotsa - University of Ioannina, Greece

Lena Hellblom Sjögren - Testimonia, Rimbo, Sweden

Masomah A. Ibrahim - College of Basic Education, Public Authority for Applied Education, Kuwait

Shaila Khan - Tougaloo College, USA

Julian Lloyd - University of Chester, UK

Francisco Machado – Maia University Institute (ISMAI), Portugal

Márcia Machado – Maia University Institute (ISMAI), Portugal

Parminder Parmar - Pennsylvania State University Worthington Scranton, USA

Syeda Sanobar Rizvi - National University of Sciences and Technology, Pakistan

Anisha Shah - National Institute of Mental Health & Neuro Sciences, Bangalore, India

Karuna Thakur - Vidyasagar Institute of Mental Health & Neuro Sciences, New Delhi, India

Anna K. Touloumakos - Centre for Skills Knowledge and Organisational Performance,
University of Oxford, UK

INTRODUCTION

This book compiles selected papers presented at the 4th International Congress on Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection held in Chandigarh, India, in 2013. The Congress was organized by the International Society for Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection (ISIPAR). Included in the book are some of the most recent studies on interpersonal acceptance-rejection. These studies encompass views from around the globe including countries such as Kuwait, USA, Greece, Portugal, Sweden, Bangladesh, UK, India, and Pakistan, thus acknowledging the diversity of life experiences in these contexts as well as its universal characteristics. Each paper deals with issues related to interpersonal acceptance, and presents a view from different countries. In spite of sociocultural differences, it is important to note the underlying role that interpersonal acceptance and rejection plays across cultures and issues, reinforcing the proven value of interpersonal acceptance as a key dimension/model to better understand a wide range of psychological issues.

The papers presented in this book clearly demonstrate the importance of interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPARTheory, formerly known as parental acceptance-rejection theory, PARTheory) by successfully applying its extensive research to issues currently under intense scrutiny by the scientific community and society in general. Issues like childhood/parental alienation and the quality of interpersonal relations in schools, for example, have been categorized as priorities for research and intervention in several countries.

The book is divided into four Parts: Childhood/Parental Alienation; Adolescence and Young Adults; Adulthood; and, Methodological Issues. Each one of these includes different studies that contribute not only to further develop what we already know about interpersonal acceptance-rejection, but also to shed new light on important issues that concern researchers, psychologists, and populations in general.

The first Part, dedicated to the theme of Childhood/Parental Alienation, includes two chapters reflecting different views of the parental alienation syndrome, one reflecting on this issue in the USA and the other focusing on Sweden and Norway.

The second Part focuses on Adolescence and Young Adults, and comprises five chapters dealing with different topics that have emerged as important for these age groups. The attention given by researchers worldwide to these specific groups underlines the importance given to the impact that interpersonal acceptance and rejection can have on the present and future adjustment and development of these age groups. As such, this part includes a chapter on fatherhood and masculinity in Pakistan; interpersonal acceptance and psychological adjustment in the USA; locus of control and interpersonal acceptance in Bangladesh; teacher acceptance and academic self-efficacy in Portugal and Spain; and, parental acceptance, psychological adjustment and parental power and prestige in Kuwait.

The third Part, which analyzes Adulthood, presents two chapters that explore the implications of interpersonal acceptance and rejection from the perspective of clinical and health psychology. One of these chapters focuses on interpersonal acceptance and mindfulness in American women, whereas the other addresses the disclosures, during psychotherapy, of acceptance-rejection experiences among Indian men.

The final Part addresses Methodological Issues. It contains two chapters presenting the adaptation of two questionnaires used in research associated with interpersonal acceptance. One of these studies assessed the Adult Parental Power/Prestige Questionnaire (3PQ) in the UK. The other study assessed the Parents' Evaluation of Children's Conduct (PECC) in Greece. Research included in this volume represents new paths being taken in the field of interpersonal acceptance. This work helps to raise awareness about the impact of interpersonal acceptance-rejection on important psychological

issues. As new data are gathered in terms of both psychological and methodological issues it becomes clear that IPARTheory continues to capture the interest of researchers and practitioners worldwide.

We would like to acknowledge Ronald and Nancy Rohner for their trust in our editorial skills, and for all their support in this process. We would also like to express our gratitude to the group of reviewers for their effort in doing extensive in-depth reviews. Without them, we would not have been able to produce such a high quality book. Finally, we want to send a special thank you and congratulations to the authors for their dedication to the quality of their research and for the perseverance all of them showed through the reviewing process.

Márcia Machado

Francisco Machado

PART I
CHILDHOOD/PARENTAL ALIENATION

PARENTAL ALIENATION, CHILD PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE, AND PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE-REJECTION THEORY

William Bernet

Abstract

Parental alienation is a serious mental condition that affects many children whose parents are embroiled in a high-conflict divorce. Most cases of severe parental alienation are caused by an alienating parent, who purposefully indoctrinates the child to dislike, fear, and reject a relationship with the rejected parent. It is generally accepted that causing parental alienation in a child is a form of psychological abuse. Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory may be a very useful framework for evaluating cases of possible parental alienation.

Parental Alienation, Child Psychological Abuse, and Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory

Parental alienation (PA) is a serious mental condition that affects many children whose parents are embroiled in a high-conflict divorce. When PA occurs, the child allies himself strongly with one parent (the preferred parent) and rejects a relationship with the other parent (the alienated parent). When PA is mild, it is possible that the problem occurred without the active encouragement of the preferred parent. For example, it is possible that the child finds himself with strong loyalty conflicts, which are very uncomfortable. The child might remove himself from the battle zone between the parents by taking the side of one parent and turning against the other parent.

However, when PA is severe, the condition is caused by an alienating parent who purposefully indoctrinates the child to dislike, fear, and reject a relationship with the alienated or target parent (Lorandos, Bernet, & Sauber, 2013). It is generally accepted that causing PA in a child is a form of psychological abuse. In this article, the author will provide definitions of psychological abuse and will summarize the support from the professional literature that considers causing PA to be a form of psychological maltreatment.

Parental acceptance-rejection theory (PARTheory) may be a very useful framework for evaluating cases of possible PA. PARTheory provides a sensitive, reliable method for identifying and measuring the child's perceptions of the attitudes and feelings of the mother and father (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005). When children of divorced parents refuse to have a relationship with one of the parents, there are several possible explanations that should be considered (Bernet & Freeman, 2013). The two prime explanations for contact refusal are estrangement (when the child refuses to have a relationship with a parent for a good reason) and alienation (when the child refuses to have a relationship with the rejected parent without legitimate justification). One of the tests that is used in PARTheory – the Parental Acceptance and Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) – may be very helpful in distinguishing estrangement from alienation.

It is important to note that PA constitutes a special case of parental rejection (Baker, 2010). In PA, the child feels rejected by both the alienating parent and the target parent. Baker explains that the children feel rejected by the alienating parent because that parent “create[s] a feeling of rejection in their children by making parental love conditional on the child's rejection of the other parent.”

Furthermore, the children feel rejected by the target parent because they develop “the false belief that the rejected parent does not really love or care for them” (Baker, 2010, p. 4). In PA, the child perceives the alienated parent as being highly rejecting, but the child’s perception is mistaken.

In fact, the alienated parent is not rejecting, but had a history of being a loving, nurturing parent. Previously, the child and the alienated parent had an enjoyable, mutually satisfying relationship. The child’s perception that the alienated parent is highly rejecting is a false belief. Sometimes, the child’s rejection occurs quickly: although a few days or weeks previously, the child fully loved spending time with the alienated parent, currently the child rejects that parent in an adamant, persistent, hateful manner. Of course, the child’s behavior is inexplicable and frustrating for the alienated parent, so that parent may respond in a somewhat rejecting manner. However, the essence of PA is that the child’s rejection of the alienated parent is far out of proportion to anything that parent has done. When one parent indoctrinates a child to fear or despise the other parent, that is an example of psychological abuse of the child.

Definitions of Psychological Abuse

Psychological abuse is a hard concept to get one’s mind around. In their classic book, Garbarino, Guttman and Seeley (1986) discussed behaviors that constitute psychological abuse: rejecting, isolating, terrorizing, ignoring, corrupting, verbally assaulting, and overpressuring the child. The American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) defined psychological maltreatment as “a repeated pattern of caregiver behavior or extreme incident(s) that convey to children that they are worthless, flawed, unwanted, endangered, or only of value in meeting another’s needs” (APSAC, 1995, p. 2). The United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHS) defined psychological abuse as “acts or omissions – other than physical abuse or sexual abuse – that caused or could have caused: conduct; cognitive; affective; or other behavioral or mental disorders. Frequently occurs as verbal abuse or excessive demands on a child’s performance” (DHS, 2013, p. 119). Garbarino’s definition of psychological abuse emphasizes the behavior of the abusive parent; both the APSAC and DHS definitions emphasize the result of the abuse in the victim child.

Child psychological abuse is now included as a mental condition in both the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), which was published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA), and the *International Classification of Diseases*, Tenth Edition (ICD-10), which was published by the World Health Organization. The definition of child psychological abuse in DSM-5 is “non-accidental verbal or symbolic acts by a child’s parent or caregiver that result, or have reasonable potential to result, in significant psychological harm to the child. ... Example acts of psychological abuse of a child include berating, disparaging, or humiliating the child, threatening the child,” etc. (APA, 2013, page 719). It is notable that although DSM-5 does not include the actual words, “parental alienation,” it includes the concept of PA in another new diagnosis, child affected by parental relationship distress, which “should be used when the focus of clinical attention is the negative effects of parental relationship discord (e.g., high levels of conflict, distress, or disparagement) on a child in the family...” (APA, 2013, p. 716).

Causing Parental Alienation is Psychological Child Abuse

Regarding terminology, the author is using “parental alienation” to mean the mental condition of the child, who aligns strongly with the alienating parent and rejects a relationship with the alienated parent without legitimate justification. The phrase, “causing parental alienation,” refers to the behavior of the alienating parent, such as indoctrinating the child to fear the alienated parent. Hundreds of

authors from at least 36 countries have described PA and many of them described PA as a form of psychological or emotional abuse (e.g., Baker & Ben Ami, 2011a, 2011b).

Gardner, who initially defined parental alienation syndrome (PAS) in 1985, said, “A parent who inculcates a PAS in a child is indeed perpetrating a form of emotional abuse in that such programming may not only produce lifelong alienation from a loving parent, but lifelong psychiatric disturbance in a child” (Gardner, 1998, p. xxi).

A psychiatrist in Germany said, “The induction of PAS in the child must be considered as a form of psychological/emotional abuse. It may be linked with long-term traumatic effects in the child and later the adult” (Boch-Galhau, 2013, p. 103).

A forensic psychologist in South Africa said, “It is suggested that PAS be recognized as a form of child abuse; accordingly custody may be awarded to the innocent party, with sanctions potentially applied against the alienating party” (Szabo, 2002, p. 1).

In addition to individual practitioners, government agencies and professional organizations have agreed that causing PA is a form of psychological abuse. For example, in the United States, the Longitudinal Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect (LONGSCAN) classified and defined every type of child maltreatment. They cited an example of emotional maltreatment as, “The caregiver undermines the child’s relationships with other people significant to the child, e.g., makes frequent derogatory comments about other parents” (English & LONGSCAN Investigators, 1997, page 28).

In Italy, La Società Italiana di Neuropsichiatria dell’Infanzia e dell’Adolescenza (SINPIA) said, “Psychological abuse includes: acts of rejection, psychological terrorism, exploitation, isolation and removal of the child from the social context. ... A further form of psychological abuse may be the alienation of a parent figure by the other until the cooperation of a child in ‘Parental Alienation Syndrome’ (SINPIA, 2007, p. 11).

Finally, the government of Brazil passed a law making it illegal to cause PA. The legislators said, “The practice of parental alienation infringes upon a fundamental right the child or adolescent has in having a healthy family life, impairs affection in the relationship with the parent and other family members, and constitutes psychological abuse of the child or adolescent ...” (Lei No. 12.318, 2010).

Parental Alienation and Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory

PARTheory is a comprehensive system that studies the relationship between children and the parents or caregivers. “Together, parental acceptance and rejection form the warmth dimension of parenting. ... The warmth dimension has to do with the quality of the affectional bond between parents and their children, and with the physical and verbal behaviors parents use to express these feelings” (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005, p. 5). The premise of PARTheory is that children who perceive their parents as rejecting are more likely to have psychosocial difficulties as children and problematic personality traits later in life. A meta-analysis of 43 worldwide studies showed that approximately 26% of the variability in children’s psychological adjustment and 21% of adults’ psychological adjustment is accounted for by parental acceptance and rejection (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002).

Although there are several subtheories developed by PARTheory authors, the aspect that is most pertinent to PA are the tools used to measure the child’s perception of his or her parents. There are two versions of the PARQ, in which the child answers questions about his mother and father. There are 60 questions in the PARQ, such as, “My mother says nice things about me,” and, “My mother pays no attention to me,” which are scored between Almost Always True (a score of 4) and Almost Never True (a score of 1). When the responses are added together, the total score will be between 60 and 240, with the lower numbers reflecting the child’s perception of acceptance and higher numbers reflecting the child’s perception of rejection. In a general way, scores below the midpoint (150)

indicate the child feels more acceptance than rejection from that parent; scores above 150 indicate the child feels more rejection than acceptance. Clearly, the PARQ is intended to measure the child's subjective perception of acceptance or rejection by a parent; the PARQ does not measure objectively the behaviors of the parent that reflect acceptance (such as physical and verbal displays of affection) or rejection (such as physical or verbal displays of aggression or neglect).

According to Rohner and Khaleque (2005, p. 49), the following PARQ scores (table 1) are found in children in the U.S.:

Table 1
Scores on the Parental and Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) by Children in the U.S.
(Rohner & Khaleque (2005, p. 49)).

PARQ Score	Range	Frequency	Interpretation
80 or below	Very low	Unusual	Response bias. Perhaps the child is reporting unusually affectionate parents because of denial or wish fulfillment.
90-110	Low	Common, typical response	This range of scores occurs in typical children reporting their perception of substantial loving acceptance by their parents.
140	Middle	Presumably less common	Although this score is on the acceptance side of the mid-point, this range of scores reflects the child's perception of serious parental rejection.
150	Exact mid-point		
150 or higher	High	7-10% of general population	This range of scores reflects the child's perception of very serious parental rejection

The PARQ has been in use for about 40 years and has been translated into almost 30 languages. The PARQ has been considered a reliable and valid instrument in about 60 countries. The author believes that the PARQ will be helpful in the identification and assessment of children who manifest contact refusal. As stated previously, the two most common reasons for persistent contact refusal are estrangement (refusal to relate to a parent for good cause) and alienation (refusal to relate to a parent without a good cause). The task of distinguishing estrangement from alienation comes up in both clinical and forensic evaluations, such as child custody evaluations. The person conducting the evaluation of a child's contact refusal could ask the child of the divorcing or divorced parents to complete the PARQ concerning the mother and the father. Of course, a comprehensive child custody evaluation should not rely exclusively on an isolated psychological test. If the PARQ were used in a child custody evaluation, it would only be one part of an assessment that includes interviews of the family members, observations of the child and each parent together, information from collateral sources, review of various documents, and probably additional psychological tests.

Research Proposal

The PARQ has been studied extensively. There have been hundreds of publications and several extensive reviews (Khaleque, 2013; Khaleque & Rohner, 2002, 2012) of the topic. Mental health professionals who provide clinical assessment and treatment of children of divorced parents may find

the PARQ very helpful. However, additional research needs to be accomplished before the PARQ can be presented in a forensic setting, such as testifying in a child custody case. Even now, a forensic practitioner may want to administer the PARQ as part of a child custody evaluation in order to gain familiarity with the instrument, but should not base his or her conclusions on the PARQ until preliminary research has been completed.

A comprehensive research project could be undertaken by several practitioners and/or mental health clinics working together. It is unlikely that a single practitioner or clinic would have enough families to fill the cells of the study. (Although this proposal refers to “about 40 families” in each cell, the actual number should be determined based on a power analysis.) The study should include:

- About 40 families in which the parents are divorced, but are not experiencing high conflict. The children have a satisfactory relationship with both mother and father. They could be families who have come to the clinic for evaluation or counseling for some other problem. These children are the Normal Controls.
- About 40 families in which the parents are divorced and the children manifest contact refusal. It has been determined as definitely as possible that the children were physically or sexually abused, so the children refuse to have contact with the abusive parent. These children are the Estrangement subjects.
- About 40 families in which the parents are divorced and the children manifest contact refusal. It has been determined as definitely as possible that the children refuse to have contact with one of the parents without good cause. These children are the Alienation subjects.

The hypothesis is that the PARQ scores of the Estrangement subjects regarding the abusive parent will be significantly different than the PARQ scores of the Alienation subjects regarding the rejected parent. PARQ scores can range from 60 (the child feels extremely accepted) to 240 (the child feels extremely rejected). The predictions for this study are:

1. The PARQ scores of the Normal Controls regarding both mother and father will be slightly higher than those of unselected populations of children in the United States.

In previous research, the paternal and maternal PARQ scores of various populations were between 90 and 110, which is considered the range for typical children reporting substantial loving acceptance. For example, Campo and Rohner (1992) studied young adults with substance abuse problems; they also tested a control group of adolescents and young adults who were not substance abusers ($n = 40$). The mean of the paternal PARQ scores of the Campo and Rohner control subjects was 93.9 ($SD = 26.4$) (Rohner, personal communication, April 11, 2013); the mean of the maternal PARQ scores of the control subjects was 95.0 ($SD = 14.0$).

Veneziano (2000) studied African American and European American (total $n = 281$) children and adolescents. The mean of the perceived paternal PARQ scores of the Veneziano subjects was 97 ($SD = 20.4$, $n = 240$); the mean of the maternal PARQ scores was 98.2 ($SD = 28.4$, $n = 281$). Veneziano concluded, “These findings indicate that the majority of children in the county feel loved and accepted by their major male and female caretakers” (p. 127). He also reported that 15 (6%) of the subjects had paternal PARQ scores at or above 150 and 15 (5%) of the subjects had maternal PARQ scores at or above 150.

Kim (2008) studied Korean American early adolescents ($n = 103$). The mean of the perceived paternal PARQ scores of the Kim subjects was 106.87 ($SD = 24.57$); the mean of the maternal PARQ scores was 105.57 ($SD = 27.26$). Kim concluded, “Overall, this sample of young Korean American

adolescents perceived both their mothers and fathers as warm and loving ..." (p. 199). Kim also commented, "Adolescents perceived approximately 9% ($n = 9$) of mothers and 5% ($n = 5$) of fathers as severely rejecting (score ≥ 150)" (p. 198).

Kitahara (1987) studied university students in Sweden ($n = 71$). The mean PARQ score of that group of subjects was 93.85 ($SD = 25.74$). Cournoyer and his colleagues (2005) studied university students in Ukraine ($n = 108$). The mean paternal PARQ score of that group of subjects was 104.5 ($SD = 36.4$); the mean maternal PARQ score was 92 ($SD = 22$). Rohner and his colleagues (2005) studied children and adolescents in Finland ($n = 44$) and Pakistan ($n = 100$). The mean maternal PARQ for the subjects in Finland was 103.48 ($SD = 22.61$); the mean maternal PARQ for the subjects in Pakistan was 98.30 ($SD = 23.53$).

The mean PARQ scores for children of low-conflict divorced parents is somewhat higher than the scores of low-conflict married parents. Öngider and Eryüksel (2006) studied children of married ($n = 138$) and divorced ($n = 124$) parents in Turkey. They found that the mean of the paternal PARQ scores of children of low-conflict married parents was 79; the mean of the maternal PARQ scores of children of low-conflict married parents was 78. However, the mean of the paternal PARQ scores of children of low-conflict divorced parents was 91, higher than that of married parents; also, the mean of the maternal PARQ scores of children of low-conflict divorced parents was 82, also higher than that of married parents.

Prediction. The prediction for the proposed study is that the scores for Normal Controls, who are children of divorced parents, will have slightly higher perceptions of rejection than the scores of children from the general population. That is because of the stress almost always associated with parental divorce. That phenomenon has been called the spillover effect, i.e., children of divorced parents experience problematic parenting in the form of rejection (Malik, 2012). Thus, the prediction would be that the paternal and maternal PARQ scores of the Normal Controls will be between 100 and 120.

2. The PARQ scores of the Estrangement subjects will reflect that the children perceive the abusive parents as moderately rejecting and the nonabusive parents as accepting.

In previous research, Lovett (1995) studied sexually abused female children ($n = 60$) and their nonabusive mothers. Lovett administered the PARQ to the girls and asked them to report how their mother treated them. The mean total score in that sample on the PARQ was 103 ($SD = 31.34$), which is within the warm and accepting range. However, five girls scored over 150. Those subjects are comparable to the Estranged subjects in the proposed experiment, with regard to their perception of the preferred parents.

Campo and Rohner (1992) studied young adults ($n = 40$) who were entering a residential treatment program for significant problems with substance abuse. They noted that the substance abusers reported serious family conflict and dysfunction; they experienced verbal and emotional abuse, beatings and other forms of harsh physical punishment, frequent divorce and separation, neglect, desertion, and abandonment. Given their family histories, it is likely the substance abusers perceived their fathers as more abusive than their mothers. The mean total score in that sample on the paternal PARQ was 162.4 ($SD = 41.2$); the mean total score in that sample on the maternal PARQ was 136.9 ($SD = 41.1$). Those subjects are comparable to the Estranged subjects in the proposed experiment, with regard to their perception of the abusive parents.

Prediction. It would be expected that abused children will maintain some degree of ambivalence toward the abusive parent, so the child perceives that parent as accepting in some ways and rejecting in other ways. The prediction for the proposed study would be that the mean PARQ score for the

abusive parents will be between 150 and 170; the mean PARQ score for the nonabusive parents will be between 100 and 120.

3. The PARQ scores of the Alienation subjects will reflect that the children perceive the alienated parents as extremely rejecting and the preferred parent as extremely accepting.

The predicted results of this proposed experiment will be similar to Bricklin's findings with the Bricklin Perceptual Scales (BPS) in children who manifested PA. Bricklin referred to those children as mind-made-up (MMU) configuration, which occurs as part of a not-based-on-actual-interaction (NBOAI) scenario (Bricklin, 1995). He found that MMU children rated the preferred parent extremely or abnormally high and the rejected parent extremely or abnormally low on the BPS.

Prediction. The prediction would be that the mean PARQ score for the preferred parents will be very low, e.g., between 70 and 90 (that is, lower than typical children in low-conflict married and low-conflict divorced families). The mean PARQ score for the alienated parents will be very high, between 180 and 200 (that is, higher than estranged children who reject an abusive or neglectful parent). Some of the PARQ scores for alienated parents will approach 240, the most negative assessment possible.

The predictions in this proposed research study are based on the definition of PA and the descriptions of PA by numerous authors. Children who experience PA typically manifest some or all of the following behaviors: persistent rejection or denigration of a parent; weak, frivolous rationalizations for the child's persistent criticism of the rejected parent; lack of ambivalence toward the parents; independent-thinker phenomenon; reflexive support of one parent against the other; absence of guilt over exploitation of the rejected parent; presence of borrowed scenarios; and spread of animosity to the extended family of the rejected parent (Gardner, 1985; Bernet, 2010). Clinicians and forensic experts have found that children who experience PA almost always manifest a lack of ambivalence toward their parents. The children perceive the preferred parent as totally good and the alienated parent as totally evil. One youngster literally said, "My mother is my angel. My father is a devil."

Of course, in PA, the child's perception does not reflect reality; the child's refusal to have contact with the alienated parent is driven by the false belief that the parent is evil, dangerous, or not worthy of love. The child strongly rejects that parent and projects the rejection onto the alienated parent, thus claiming that it is that parent who has rejected the child. It is likely that PARQ will be an objective way to measure the lack of ambivalence of the child who experiences PA. It is this author's prediction that the child's PARQ score of the preferred parent will be significantly below that of an average child in a typical household (i.e., below 90) and the child's PARQ score of the alienated parent will be significantly above that of a child who has been the victim of abuse or neglect (i.e., above 180).

Discussion

If these predictions are borne out, one would conclude that administering the PARQ regarding both mother and father with children who manifest contact refusal would help both clinical and forensic practitioners distinguish realistic estrangement from PA. It is interesting, of course, that children who experience PA perceive the alienated parent (who was not abusive at all) as even more rejecting than how children perceive a parent who actually was abusive. That prediction – if it turns out to be correct – will provide a very important objective measure for distinguishing estrangement from alienation. Some mental health evaluators wrongly conclude that the child's insistence on the mean-

ness of the rejected parent is simply evidence for actual abuse by that parent. In fact, the child's extreme insistence on the meanness of the rejected parent may be evidence not of abuse, but of PA.

This type of research may be considered contrary to the precepts of PARTheory and the usual application of PARQ testing. Scholars who have studied PARTheory have emphasized how important it is to determine the feelings and perceptions of the child, a very important aspect of understanding family interactions. PARQ is considered an accurate instrument for measuring those feelings and perceptions in a valid manner, i.e., identifying and quantifying processes that are really occurring in the families that are tested. In families that experience PA, however, the PARQ would still reflect the child's feelings and opinions, but it would not reflect the actual reality within the family. That is, the child may perceive the alienated parent is highly rejecting, but in fact that parent is not rejecting at all. The application of PARQ described in this chapter will be a new area, i.e., helping to identify children who have strongly held false beliefs about one or both parents.

Acknowledgments

The author acknowledges the helpful suggestions of Amy J. L. Baker, Ph.D., and Christian T. Dum, Ph.D.

References

- American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (1995). *Guidelines for the psychosocial evaluation of suspected psychological maltreatment in children and adolescents*. Chicago, IL: Author.
- American Psychiatric Association (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.
- Baker, A. J. L. (2010, September). Parental alienation: A special case of parental rejection. *Interpersonal Acceptance*, 4, 4-5, 10.
- Baker, A. J. L., & Ben-Ami, N. (2011a). To turn a child against a parent is to turn a child against himself: The direct and indirect effects of exposure to parental alienation strategies on self-esteem and wellbeing. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 52 (7), 472-489.
- Baker, A. J. L., & Ben-Ami, N. (2011b). Adult recall of childhood psychological maltreatment in adult children of divorce: Prevalence and association with outcomes. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 52(4), 203-219.
- Bernet, W. (Ed.) (2010). *Parental alienation, DSM-5, and ICD-11*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.
- Bernet, W., & Freeman, B. W. (2013). Psychosocial assessment of contact refusal. In D. Lorandos, W. Bernet, & R. S. Sauber, *Parental alienation: The handbook for mental health and legal professionals* (pp. 47-73). Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.
- Boch-Galhau, W. V. (2013). *Parental alienation and parental alienation syndrome/disorder: A serious form of psychological child abuse—with case examples*. Berlin: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung.
- Bricklin, B. (1995). *The custody evaluation handbook: Research-based solutions and applications*. New York, NY: Brunner/Mazel.
- Campo, A. T., & Rohner, R. P. (1992). Relationships between perceived parental acceptance-rejection, psychological adjustment, and substance abuse among young adults. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 16, 429-440.
- Cournoyer, D. E., Sethi, R., & Cordero, A. (2005). Perceptions of parental acceptance-rejection and self-concepts among Ukrainian university students. *Ethos*, 33, 335-346.

- English, D. J., & LONGSCAN Investigators (1997). *Modified Maltreatment Classification System (MMCS)*. Accessed at <http://www.iprc.unc.edu/longscan/>
- Garbarino, J., Guttman, E., & Seeley, J. W. (1986). *The psychologically battered child: Strategies for identification, assessment and intervention*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Gardner, R. A. (1985). Recent trends in divorce and custody litigation. *Academy Forum* 29(2), 3-7.
- Gardner, R. A. (1998). *The parental alienation syndrome: A guide for mental health and legal professionals* (2nd ed.). Cresskill, NJ: Creative Therapeutics.
- Khaleque, A. (2013). Perceived parental warmth and affection, and children's psychological adjustment, and personality dispositions: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 22, 297-306.
- Khaleque, A., & Rohner, R. P. (2002). Perceived parental acceptance-rejection and psychological adjustment: A meta-analysis of cross cultural and intracultural studies. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 64, 54-64.
- Khaleque, A., & Rohner, R. P. (2012). Transcultural relations between perceived parental acceptance and personality dispositions of children and adults: A meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15, 103-115.
- Kim, E. (2008). Psychological adjustment in young Korean American adolescents and parental warmth. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, 21 (4), 195-201.
- Kitahara, M. (1987). Perception of parental acceptance and rejection among Swedish university students. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 11, 223-227.
- Lei No. 12.318 (2010, August 26). Retrieved from http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2007-2010/2010/L12318.htm
- Lorandos, D., Bernet, W., & Sauber, S. R. (2013). *Parental alienation: The handbook for mental health and legal professionals*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.
- Lovett, B. B. (1995). Child sexual abuse: The female victim's relationship with her nonoffending mother. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 19 (6), 729-738.
- Malik, F. (2012, May). Spillover of spousal rejection to parental rejection of children: A new line of PARTheory research in Pakistan and elsewhere. *Interpersonal Acceptance*, 6 (2), 1, 3-4.
- Öngider, V. A., & Eryüksel, G. (2006). Perceptions of parental acceptance-rejection and psychological adjustment of children in low and high conflict marriages and divorces. Presented at First International Congress on Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection, Istanbul, Turkey, June 22-24, 2006.
- Rohner, R. P., & Khaleque, A. (Eds.) (2005). *Handbook for the study of parental acceptance and rejection* (4th ed.). Storrs, CT: Rohner Research Publications.
- Rohner, R. P., Khaleque, A., Riaz, M. N., Khan, U., Sadeque, S., & Laukkala, H. (2005). Agreement between children's and mothers' perceptions of maternal acceptance and rejection: A comparative study in Finland and Pakistan. *Ethos*, 33 (3), 367-377.
- Società Italiana di Neuropsichiatria dell'Infanzia e dell'Adolescenza (2007). *Linee Guida in Tema di Abuso sui Minori [Guidelines on the Theme of Abuse of Children]* [Italian]. Accessed at <http://www.sinpia.eu/>
- Szabo, C. P. (2002). Parental alienation syndrome. *South African Psychiatry Review* 5(3), 1.
- United States Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau (2013). *Child maltreatment 2012*. Accessed at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>
- Veneziano, R. A. (2000). Perceived paternal and maternal acceptance and rural African American and European American youths' psychological adjustment. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, 123-132.

PARENTAL ALIENATION: CONDITIONAL LOVE AND FORCED REJECTION

Lena Hellblom Sjögren

Abstract

This article originates from a research project in which 60 authentic high conflict separation cases were investigated between 1991-2011. These were cases in which the author, based on an analysis of many documents over time, had, in every single case, identified two conditions: a) a child's sudden and implacable fear and/or hostility towards a former loved parent from whom the child had been separated, with this parent not having used violence or sexually abused the child; b) a parental figure (a parent or social services' employees with parental authority) who had influenced the child, in actions and in words, to reject contact with the parent from whom the child had been separated. The fundamental question was: What are the consequences for the child? The two cases presented in this chapter illustrate the situation of about 6000 Swedish children and 5000 Norwegian children every year, who, when the adults have separated, are not allowed by one parent to receive love and acceptance from the other. The empirically founded conclusion, supported by studies of parental loss from different research fields, is that the children thus treated are severely harmed.

Keywords: parental alienation; parental loss; mental abuse; legal and human right to family life

Thanks to Marcia Machado for her help to improve the author's text.

Parental Alienation: Conditional Love and Forced Rejection

"Two things shall be given to the child from the parents, roots and wings."

A wise wording of unknown source

The purpose of this article is to explore what is known to be the child's deepest need, legal and human right, the right to family life, and the consequences of not fulfilling this need while violating the child's legal and human rights. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the author has worked as an investigative, forensic psychologist and a researcher, mostly in severe custody conflicts and/or criminal sexual abuse cases in Sweden, but also in Norway, and exceptionally in some other countries. More and more of the investigated high conflict separation cases involved a parent who wanted to take control over the children, and who appeared to be driven by an implacable hostility towards the other parent. The parental alienation processes consist of influencing the children to become hostile and to reject the other parent without justified cause, and these processes have not, so far, been understood by family experts and by the family law system in Sweden and Norway.

Many experts in other countries consider it mental or emotional abuse when a child, without justification, is separated from a loved and loving parent and influenced to reject him/her (Bernet, 2010; Lorandos, Bernet, Sauber, 2013). The empirically observed phenomenon of parental alienation can be seen as mental kidnapping (Richardson, 2006).