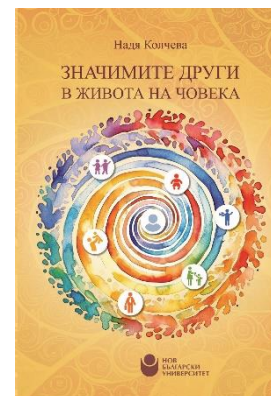


Nadia Koltcheva

“Significant others in a person’s life”¹

Summary



“Significant Others in Human Life” is a book in which I present a broader view of the topic of human relationships with a focus on relationships with significant others, as well as part of the many studies, the fruit of long-term scientific work, more than ten years, that I have conducted within the framework of the Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory).

In the course of our human existence, the relationships we form with significant others are deeply woven into our human nature. They are woven into complex patterns that shape our experiences, shape our perceptions of ourselves and the world, our personal growth and well-being, and influence the life path we take. They give us our identity and understanding of ourselves, but they could also “distort” our perceptions of the world. The purpose of this book is to present an in-depth knowledge of the immense importance of relationships with significant others, their role in human development and life, and to place these relationships in the broader framework of human existence, considering them also through the lens of a different social context. This was done by analyzing numerous studies conducted in various countries around the world and in our country.

The book has 348 pages and consists of an introduction, 7 chapters, a conclusion and a list of 475 references.

The first three chapters are theoretical. The book begins with a brief overview of what human development is (Chapter 1.). I pay special attention to our biological predisposition to social interactions, as well as to the environment and environmental factors, in particular the social context, which play a key role in our overall development as human beings. Human development is continuous and dynamically changing, under the influence of biological and environmental factors. We live in an ever-changing environment, and we change the environment and the environment changes us. In Chapter 2, I examine concepts and definitions related to social and interpersonal relationships, the different types of social relationships, and the significant others involved in them. In Chapter 3, I present theoretical models that provide the foundations for understanding relationships with others. I take a closer look at two theories. Attachment Theory, which focuses on the formation of close relationships, and Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory, which explains the quality of emotional bonds with others. This part concludes with a comparison between the main postulates and concepts of the two theories, something that has not been done in this comprehensive form until now.

In the next four chapters, I trace relationships with different types of significant others—parents, teachers, intimate partners, managers in the workplace. In each of them, an in-depth

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review and analysis of scientific research in other countries, dedicated to the relationship with each of these figures, and research that tests the postulates of IPARTheory in Bulgaria is presented. Part of my research work that I am presenting is related to the translation and adaptation of the tools with which the research was conducted in our country. In this book, I present 10 of the questionnaires and scales translated and adapted by me into Bulgarian:

1. Parental Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire, Child (PARQ/C, Child), Long Form, Mother Version
2. Parental Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire, Child (PARQ/C, Child), Long Form, Father Version
3. Parental Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire, Adult (PARQ/C, Adult), Long Form, Mother Version
4. Parental Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire, Adult (PARQ/C, Adult), Long Form, Father Version
5. Personality Assessment Questionnaire, Child (PAQ, Child)
6. Personality Assessment Questionnaire, Adult (PAQ, Adult)
7. Interpersonal Rejection Sensitivity Scale (IRSS)
8. Teacher's Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (TARQ/C), Short Form
9. Teacher's Evaluation of Student's Conduct Questionnaire (TESC)
10. Intimate Partner Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (IPAR/CQ)

Chapter 4 is about family and parents, the significant others who are usually our first relationships in life. I examine the acceptance-rejection relationships between children and parents postulated by IPARTheory. A special section is devoted to the consequences of subjectively perceived rejection in childhood and adulthood (anxiety, depression, behavioural problems, substance abuse, etc.). The results of the presented studies generally confirm the presence of expected negative interrelationships with psychological adjustment in both children and adults.

In Chapter 5, I examine the relationship between teacher and student at school. As the child grows, the social context expands. A normative life event for children in our society is going to school, and the teachers they meet there are other significant figures in their lives. The results show a correlation between the child's subjective perception of acceptance or rejection by the teacher and the presence of behavioural manifestations. For the first time in the history of this line of research on a global scale, attention is paid to age differences in the studied interrelationships (I presented two studies conducted in our country).

Chapter 6 is devoted to relationships with an intimate partner. Quality relationships with other human beings, not only in childhood but also during the other stages of life, are the key to individual well-being, mental and physical health, satisfaction with life in general. In the presented research, I find significant correlations between perceived acceptance-rejection by an intimate partner and the psychological adjustment of individuals. I present a new line of analysis of the studied interrelationships through the prism of the type of family status of the participants, a variable that is not present in the analyses of other researchers.

In Chapter 7, I present the relationships in the work environment, specifically with the direct manager. There are two key themes in a person's life during adulthood - family relationships and professional life. The intimate partner is the significant other who, in adulthood, is the attachment figure. No less important for our quality of life are our relationships at work. Viewing the immediate supervisor as a significant other, this book presents for the first time relationships in the work environment, a new and unexplored area within IPARTheory. In this regard, I propose a broadening of the research scope of the theory in an organizational context. For the purposes of future research in our country and abroad, a new reliable and valid

instrument was developed (Organizational Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire, OARQ/C). It is one of the newest additions to IPARTheory's long list of questionnaires and scales. I present the procedures for constructing, translating, piloting and validating the questionnaire. Initial validation data show correlations between perceived acceptance by the manager, individual's attachment to the organization, satisfaction with the manager, and overall job satisfaction.

This book is the first research work to systematize and track relationships with significant others over the course of a person's life through the lens of IPARTheory. This work is unique not only for Bulgaria but also within the scientific literature of IPARTheory. Numerous scientific studies have been systematized and analyzed, and at the same time, a number of author's own studies, the fruit of many years of work, have been presented. They are examined in the context of numerous similar studies conducted in over 60 countries around the world. In general, the presented research carried out in our country is in line with the main postulates of the theory. In some of them, I pay attention to and empirically track a variable that has hardly been studied in the scientific literature within the framework of IPARTheory - age differences. The book presents for the first time the extension of IPARTheory in an organizational context that I proposed and implemented. The adapted tools are a valuable asset for both researchers and practitioners in our country, and the developed questionnaire is an indispensable resource for future research on relationships in organizational contexts by scholars worldwide. IPARTheory's theory and methods are used worldwide in both scientific and increasingly applied contexts (clinical and counselling practice, school systems, parent training programs, courts, child welfare agencies, etc.).

Some of the main research contributions of the book are:

- Providing an in-depth study of the broad issue of human relationships and their impact on personality, focusing on the concept of significant others as a key aspect in an individual's life journey.
- The first research paper to systematize and track relationships with significant others over the course of a person's life through the lens of IPARTheory.
- Tracing the development of relationships with significant others sequentially, in different contexts over the course of individual development – in family settings and parents as significant others (in childhood), school and teachers as significant others (through adolescence), intimate relationships and intimate partners, as and the work environment and supervisors as significant others (during adulthood).
- Bringing into focus the importance of interrelationship with another human being for the overall development of the individual. Attention is paid to the influence of multiple factors using one of the most influential models of human development – Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Human Development.
- Presentation and clarification of basic concepts in relation to interpersonal relations (social interactions, social relationships, social structure), their types, participants. Two terms are related and clearly distinguished, which are used to denote the key figures in a person's life – “significant other” and “attachment figure”.
- An in-depth analysis of a huge amount of scientific research within the framework of IPARTheory conducted in different countries around the world is presented.
- For the first time, a systematic presentation of the Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory) in Bulgaria.
- Extending the theoretical base of IPARTheory in an organizational context internationally.

- Dozens of studies conducted in Bulgaria are presented, which verify one of the main postulates of the Personality Subtheory of IPARTheory in different stages of a person's life path and in different social contexts, namely, the perceived interpersonal acceptance and/or rejection has a significant relationship with psychological (not) adjustment of the individual both in childhood and in adulthood.
- Presenting some of the first research within IPARTheory to address and provide empirical evidence for age differences (particularly at school age).
- A comparison between the basic postulates and concepts of Attachment Theory and Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory is something that has not been done in this comprehensive way to date. To date, only partial comparisons have been attempted in the scientific literature.
- Expanding the empirical base of IPARTheory through dozens of studies conducted in our country.
- A large number of author's studies are presented, some of which are unpublished and the results are presented for the first time in this book.
- Translation and adaptation for Bulgaria of 10 questionnaires and scales. Psychometric properties of the measures are also presented.
- The Bulgarian versions of the questionnaires and scales are a valuable asset for researchers. Currently, IPARTheory tools in total have translations in about 76 languages and dialects (for eg. PARQ/C is available in almost 70 languages and dialects, PAQ in about 50). This provides an opportunity for future cross-cultural research.
- The Bulgarian versions of the questionnaires and scales are a valuable resource for practitioners in our country and have undeniable practical applicability in working with children and adults in view of the continuous growth of the application of IPARTheory in clinical and counseling practice, school systems, parents training programs, courts, child protection agencies, etc.
- Development of a new instrument for assessing interpersonal acceptance-rejection in an organizational context (OARQ/C). The tool has been piloted and validated. The questionnaire is an indispensable resource for research on interpersonal relationships in organizational contexts by scholars worldwide.
- The data from the research in our country are presented within the framework of the IPARTheory postulates and are discussed in the context of numerous studies conducted in different countries around the world.
- Successfully collected large datasets with subjects from childhood to late adulthood.