

## **Covert behaviours and coping strategies in children refused by peers. A cross cultural analysis.**

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The studies carried out on the phenomenon of peer refusal have consisted primarily on research focused on the behavioural traits that predispose a child to become an object of hostility and of refusal by their friends (Coie, Dodge e Kupersmidt, 1990), while only recently it has been studied how this condition in fact is experienced and therefore perceived and faced by the subject involved. Furthermore, recently it has also been observed that the major part of the refused subjects, who manifest behaviours either of internalising of emotional states (shyness, anxiety, depression) or of externalising (aggressiveness hyperactivity), during the elaboration process of the events they frequently commit various cognitive errors (bias, distortions) such as generalisation, (categorising of events and or persons/prejudices) and subjective over-evaluation of social data going beyond the facts of the situation. This erroneous elaboration of the social information can inhibit a correct evaluation of the situation, leading to the use of dysfunctional coping strategies.

The aim of the research is to analyse the relationships among native born and foreign born peers as a function of the presence or absence of refusal mechanisms; furthermore, to examine eventual dysfunctional beliefs or ideas involved in the processes of acceptance/refusal; and finally, to evaluate the coping modalities employed to cope with the stress derived from being refused. The participants of this research were 350 native born children attending from 3rd to 8th grade school and 52 foreign born children of the same school grades.

The study predicted two assessment phases. In the first phase, we examined the quality of the scholastic integration, the modality of judgement regarding the personal characteristics of their friends and the self-evaluation of social relevance concerning the relationship with their friends and their teachers, In the second assessment phase we tested the eventual presence of dysfunctional thought processes and analysed the different coping strategies employed by the children to cope with the consequences of being refused.

Regarding the results obtained, it can be concluded that in general the children refused by their peers referred that they employed dysfunctional thought processes and socially inadequate coping strategies significantly more frequently than their peers who had well established positive social relationships, independently of national origin.

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