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EXPANDING THE "DEVELOPMENTAL/ECOLOGICAL/TRANSACTIONAL"
MODEL OF CHILD MALREATMENT WITHIN AN ETHOLOGICAL PARADIGM:
IMPLICATIONS FOR A HIGH-RISK POPULATION (256 pp.)

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This theoretical study sought to expand the functional capacity of a current best practice model for understanding child abuse and neglect by embedding it within the ethological paradigm developed by Niko Tinbergen for behavioral analysis. Tinbergen's framework incorporated ultimate evolutionary and phylogenetic considerations along with those developmental and ecological factors now typically emphasized in social science. The study explored whether Tinbergen's more comprehensive but very specifically constrained approach could theoretically ground an understanding of maltreatment that might more meaningfully organize existing diverse evidence on the subject, plus narrow the focus for future research.

Since children with disabilities are a documented high-risk group for being victims of abuse and neglect, data from the disability literature were examined along with those from maltreatment research and from the study of evolution. It was then demonstrated how the ethological paradigm might be used to integrate these three expansive bodies of knowledge in ways that show promise in helping to increase the kind of predictive power needed for development of efficient maltreatment prevention and intervention strategies.

While Tinbergen's Neo-Darwinian paradigm was shown to add a potentially useful dimension to the understanding of child maltreatment, this study also dealt with the fact evolutionary thinking has been and continues to be extremely controversial. In particular, discomfort with biological theorizing in academic and practical fields addressing human social behavior was considered as it affects the overall utility of such a paradigm at this time.