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Kids' Shame Proneness:

Is Mom's Religiosity an Overlooked Influence?



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Debra I. K. Lall

Department of Psychology, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada



Research Question

What are the **unique** and **interactive contributions** of **parent** and **child factors** in **middle childhood shame**?

Shame

Shame is a feeling of inadequacy that focuses on the whole self¹. While moderate shame serves an adaptive purpose in development by promoting self-evaluation and responsible behavior, excessive shame is problematic for children. For example, shame proneness is associated with internalizing problems, such as anxiety and depression.

The association among children's **interpretive theory of mind (IToM)**, **authoritarian parenting**, **parent religiosity**, and **shame** in middle childhood were examined. **Age**, **gender**, and **SES**, were also expected to play key roles in the development of shame. Parent religiosity is a largely overlooked influence on children's self-conscious emotional development. Thus, while the association between parent religiosity and shame was examined, an a priori hypothesis was not stated.**

Hypotheses

Authoritarian parenting & Shame: positive association.

Authoritarian parenting & IToM: negative association.

High IToM attenuates the positive Authoritarian Parenting & Shame association.

Is there an association between Maternal Religiosity and Shame in Middle Childhood? **



Methods

Participants

48 typically developing children (24 boys and 24 girls) and their mothers completed the following measures.

Measures

Child Shame and Guilt²

Shame was assessed with the *Test of Self-Conscious Affect for Children (TOSCA-C)*, consisting of hypothetical situations designed to motivate childhood feelings of shame, guilt and pride. Responses were averaged across 15 scenarios measuring shame and guilt on a 5-point Likert scale.

Interpretive Theory of Mind Ability (IToM)³

IToM was assessed with a modified version of the classic *IToM task*. There were 3 conditions with 2 trials per condition. Children predicted the thoughts of 3 characters (*knowledgeable, biased/naïve, and naïve*). Children scored 1 point per trial.

Authoritarian Parenting⁴

Mothers completed the *Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ)*. Authoritarian parenting was computed with 20 items tapping verbal hostility, corporal punishment, non-reasoning and punitive strategies, and directiveness.

Maternal Religiosity⁵

Mothers were assessed with the 15-item short form of the *Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS)*, capturing 5 dimensions of religiosity: religious thought, religious beliefs, personal devotion, communal rituals, and religious experience.

Child Age/Child Gender/Family SSES⁶

Mothers reported on the above variables. SSES was measured with the *MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (SSES)*.



Results

Analyses

Multiple regression using *PROC GLM in SAS* yielding Type III Sums of Squares, tested the model. All predictors were simultaneously entered into the analyses.

Regression analysis summary for variables predicting child shame

Predictor variables	Child Shame (residuals)		
	t-value	β	SEB
Intercept	-0.6	-0.1	0.2
Hypotheses			
IToM	-0.4	-0.1	0.1
Authoritarian Parenting	-0.8	-0.2	0.3
IToM x Authoritarian Parenting	1.4	0.2	0.1
Other predictors			
Religiosity	3.0*	0.2	0.1
Gender	-0.6	-0.1	0.2
Age	0.5	0.1	0.1
SSES	0.3	0.1	0.1
Methodology			
Advertisement vs. School	0.8	0.1	0.2

R² = .25. Adjusted-R² = .10.

F = 1.59, ns.

*p < .01.
n = 48.

Mom's Religiosity and Shame

Shame was significantly correlated with the Intellectual (religious thought), the Religious Experience, and the Public (communal rituals) dimensions of the CRS.

Intercorrelations among the religiosity (CRS) subscales and shame.

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Intellectual	--					
2. Ideology	.61**	--				
3. Public	.79**	.63**	--			
4. Private	.74**	.74**	.80**	--		
5. Experience	.68**	.76**	.70**	.79**	--	
6. Shame	.31*	.25	.34*	.24	.28*	--

**p < .0001.
*p < .05.
n = 48.



Study Implications

A parent-to-parent difference in mother religiosity and shame proneness in middle childhood is a **new and important contribution** to understanding shame.

These results may be the **first to identify** parental religiosity as an important contributor to child shame.

When it comes to children's emotional development, clinicians should **consider influences beyond parenting style**, such as parental religiosity.

Urgent call to action:

Developmental psychologists to study how maternal religiosity is related to specific parenting practices. Religion informs the standards against which children self-evaluate and self-regulate.

Religiosity is an **overlooked influence** on children's shame proneness. About 40% of Canadians and half of immigrants to Canada rate religion as "very important" (Stats. Canada, 2002). My research suggests that it is -- at least for shame proneness in children.

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