

AERA Roundtable discussion

Paper: *How Teachers Shape Children's Shame and Guilt Experiences: Development of a Multicultural Instrument*

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The literature

- We build on the work of several authors: Piaget, Vygotsky, Hoffman, Barrett, Eisenberg, Kochanska, Lewis, Stipek, Tangney, Zahn-Waxler
- Adults shape the way in which children develop in the moral domain, especially in the way they shape certain moral emotions
- We focus on one kind of adults: teachers
- We focus on 2 moral emotions: shame and guilt
- Primary emotions: joy, fear, anger, sadness, disgust, and surprise
- Secondary emotions: pride, shame, guilt, embarrassment, empathy, and envy
- Characteristics of secondary emotions:
 - notion of self as independent from others
 - SRGs
 - evaluation (internal) of one's actions, thoughts and feelings vis-à-vis these SRGs
- A typical shameful assertion is *I am a bad person because I have done something wrong*. A typical guilty assertion is *I have done something wrong and I need to repair it*
- On the behavioral aspect, shame involves: the disruption of ongoing behavior, confusion in thought, inability to speak, avoidance of others, shrinking or slumping of the body, blushing, hiding or lowering of the face
- Guilt involves: looking up, looking for the adult, doing something to repair the harm.
- The way in which teachers intervene after a moral conflict among children involving children is related to children's experience of guilt and shame: a *guilt style* in teachers correlates with a *guilt reaction* in children

The instrument

- The MCSQ is used to rate:
 - (a) Children's behavior to a moral conflict
 - (b) Teachers' interventions to the moral conflict
 - (c) Children's reaction to the intervention provided by the teacher
- The MCSQ was developed in several steps. Certain procedures were followed to assure the instrument was valid. They were:
 - (a) developing items for the MCSQ which were based on the moral development literature on shame and guilt
 - (b) subjecting items to two experts' advice
 - (c) conducting a pilot test
 - (d) subjecting our instrument to analysis of validity and reliability (230 protocols)
- Description of the instrument
There are six parts to the MCSQ (see handout):
 - 1) The first part requests demographic information such as: teachers' seniority in the teaching profession, teachers' seniority in the current school, number of children in the group observed, age of children and type of school.
 - 2) The second part requests qualitative information about the moral conflict situation observed. Nevertheless, we code the conflicts after the descriptions the monitors make.
 - 3) The third part requests information on whether the conflict was between child/child, child/teacher or both. Our 2010 figures indicate that most conflicts (59.8%) take place

among children. Nevertheless, we do also register conflicts between children and teachers (37.4%). Only one conflict was both among children and between children and teachers (0.9%).

- 4) The fourth part requests more information on the action that generated the moral conflict (15 items).
- 5) The fifth part requests information on the teacher's intervention to the moral conflict (16 items). This part describes teachers' actions and sayings regarding the moral conflict. Following the theoretical construct, we have divided teachers' pedagogical style into two factors: the *shame style* and the *guilt style*, each one of which is composed by several items (6 items belong to the *shame style* and 10 items belong to the *guilt style*).

Examples of teachers' shame style (6 items):

- The teacher judges the child's entire self. Example of item: "You are a bad boy";
- The teacher focuses only on the moral rule. Example of item: "This behavior is forbidden". Our analyses indicates a problem with this item, which apparently belongs to both shame and guilt;
- The teacher establishes a punishment. Punishments are disconnected from previous actions and therefore do not lead to the reparation of the harm committed. Example of item: "Get out of the classroom".

Examples of teachers' guilt style (10 items):

- The teacher judges the child's conduct. Example of item: "What you did was wrong";
- The teacher focuses on the harm committed and induces empathy in the child. Example of item: "Look how sad Jamie is";
- The teacher establishes a consequence as the reparation of the harm committed: guides the child in reestablishing the previous order. Example of item: apologizing.

Apparently, we observe more of a *guilt style* in teachers (See Table 12).

- 6) The sixth part requests information on the children's reactions to the teacher's intervention to the moral conflict (23 items). This part describes two ways of reacting, one related to the experience of shame (8 items) and the other related to the experience of guilt (7 items). Further, this part includes children's reactions not related to shame or guilt, but to anger, indifference, surprise or sadness (8 items; this was included following monitors advice during the pilot test).

Examples of children's shame reaction:

- Looks down
- Eludes sight
- Face gets red
- Body comes inward
- Is unable to speak
- Gets away from victim

Examples of children's guilt reaction:

- Looks up
- Looks for teacher
- Apologizes
- Shows empathy for the victim
- Repairs the harm committed: gives something back, buys a new toy, etc.

We observe more of a *guilt reaction* in children (See Table 13).