

The Relationship of Religious Orientation to Parenting Perceptions and Behaviors

Jacquelyn S. Levine, M.S.Ed.

A Doctoral Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Psychology  
In the Department of Psychology at Pace University

New York

2003

UMI Number: 3100073

Copyright 2003 by  
Levine, Jacquelyn Shari

All rights reserved.

**UMI**<sup>®</sup>

---

UMI Microform 3100073

Copyright 2003 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.  
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company  
300 North Zeeb Road  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

PSY.D PROJECT FINAL APPROVAL FORM

NAME: Jacquelyn Shari Levine

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Relationship of Religious Orientation to Parenting  
Perceptions and Behaviors

DOCTORAL PROJECT COMMITTEE:

PROJECT ADVISOR: Dr. Barbara Mowder  
Name

Director of Graduate Psychology Program  
Title

Pace University  
Affiliation

PROJECT CONSULTANT: Dr. Florence Denmark  
Name

Robert S. Pace Distinguished Research Professor  
Title

Pace University  
Affiliation

FINAL APPROVAL OF COMPLETED PROJECT:

I have read the final version of the doctoral project and certify that it meets the relevant requirements for the Psy.D. degree in School-Clinical Child Psychology.

Barbara A. Mowder  
Project Advisor's Signature

9/25/2003  
Date

Florence L. Denmark  
Project Consultant's Signature

9/25/2003  
Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Barbara Mowder, for her ongoing support, encouragement, and guidance. Her confidence in me and her belief in my ability to complete this project were the foundation upon which I developed the self-assurance required to reach this great academic milestone. I would also like to thank my consultant, Dr. Florence Denmark, for her willingness to accept the role of project consultant following the sudden and tragic loss of my initial consultant, Dr. Albert Melino. Dr. Denmark's cooperation, encouragement, and contributions were exceptionally valuable to the completion of this project.

I extend my sincere gratitude to Steve Salbod, who's hard work, effort, support, and willingness to work under my time constraints often generated and maintained the momentum needed to move my project forward. Without his assistance and knowledge of statistics this project may well have never been completed.

To my friends and family I offer my most special thanks. Their lifelong support and unfailing belief in me has meant more to my success in life than may be put into words. I especially thank my parents, Henry and Rona, for their unwavering commitment to parenthood, their unconditional love, and their guidance. They always made me believe that I could achieve all of my goals. They truly are my greatest support team.

Finally, to my fiancé and editor, Daniel O'Donnell, I thank you for your knowledge, patience, and devotion to me and this project. Your love and your faith in my abilities have proven to be the final pieces of the motivational puzzle that needed

to be solved prior to my completion of this project. Thank you for making all my dreams come true, I love you!

PREVIEW

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this project to my initial project advisor, Dr. Albert Melino, who's life was cut tragically short when he lost his gallant battle with cancer. It was Dr. Melino's support that propelled me to begin this project and his ongoing encouragement that motivated me to continue working on this project when it appeared as though my enthusiasm periodically waned. He supported me in spite of my indecisiveness and my ever changing commitments to multiple research topics. His interest in my success was unquestionable. During my search for a project and then during my study, if Dr. Melino did not hear from me for several weeks, he would contact me, ask me how it was going and encourage me to get to work. No matter what I presented to him, he responded with words of encouragement.

When I finally came to him with a solid idea, regarding parenting, he directed me to Dr. Mowder who had experience with parenting research. True to his commitment, he graciously took on the role of consultant. As my consultant, he was always attentive, supportive and invested in my success. When I learned of his illness, I felt saddened and prayed for his recovery. As a testament to his importance to me and my project, I was not sure I would be able to complete this project without his continued support. I am proud to be able to say that I did and that Dr. Melino was a great contributor to this achievement.

Dr. Melino was an attentive, caring, supportive, and involved professor, who made his students feel comfortable. Personally, he made me feel special and cared for. I always knew he would do anything he could to help me reach my goals.

I dedicate my completed project to Dr. Melino. He will be dearly missed.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
DEDICATION	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
ABSTRACT	x
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Purpose	5
Research Questions	6
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	7
The Psychodynamic Model	8
The Learning Model	11
Baumrind's Parenting Styles	12
Galinsky's Parenting Stages	14
Mowder's Parent Role Development Theory	15
Parenting Characteristics	16
Parent Role Questionnaire	20
Parent Behavior Questionnaire	20
Related Studies	21
Gender-Role Differences	24
Religiosity and Parenting	28

CHAPTER	PAGE
III. METHODS	33
Participants	33
Materials	37
Procedure	40
IV. RESULTS	41
V. DISCUSSION	60
Summary	60
Limitations of the Present Study	63
Directions for Future Research	65
Implications for Psychologist and Educators	65
REFERENCES	68
APPENDICES	
A. Parent Role Questionnaire	
B. Parent Behavior Questionnaire	



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Demographic Variables by Religion
Table 2	PRQ(%) by Religion
Table 3	Means and Standard Deviations of PBQ
Table 4	Correlation between PRQ and PBQ
Table 5	Means and Standard Deviations of Bonding on the PRQ across Developmental Stages
Table 6	Means and Standard Deviations of Discipline on the PRQ across Developmental Stages
Table 7	Means and Standard Deviations of Education on the PRQ across Developmental Stages
Table 8	Means and Standard Deviations of Protection on the PRQ across Developmental Stages
Table 9	Means and Standard Deviations of Responsivity on the PRQ across Developmental Stages
Table 10	Means and Standard Deviations of Sensitivity on the PRQ across Developmental Stages
Table 11	Means and Standard Deviations based on PRQ, Religion and Gender
Table 12	Means and Standard Deviations based on PRQ and Gender
Table 13	F ratios for Parenting Role Characteristics Gender and Religion

Table 14	Means and Standard Deviations based on PBQ, Religion and Gender
Table 15	Means and Standard Deviations based on PBQ and Gender
Table 16	F ratios for Parenting Role Characteristics based on PBQ Gender and Religion

PREVIEW

## **ABSTRACT**

Researchers acknowledge the powerful influence of parents on their children, as they shape their children's development and influence their behavior as well as their academic and social success. Previous research on parenting focused on how parenting and parenting styles affect a child's development. A relatively recent theory, Parent Role Development Theory (PRDT) identifies the importance of the social role parents' play and defines six associated parent role characteristics (i.e., bonding, discipline, education, general welfare and protection, responsivity and sensitivity). The PRDT states that individuals begin developing an understanding of what it means to be a parent from a very young age and their perception of the parenting role changes and develops over time. Individuals' life experiences, family dynamics, and socio-cultural experiences impact upon their parental role development.

Researchers have investigated the role of socioeconomic status, family structure, and ethnicity on child-rearing. However, minimal attention has been given to the impact of religiosity on parenting, in spite of researchers' findings of an association between religiosity and parental practices and the high level of reported religious affiliation among American married couples and parents.

The purpose of this study was to determine if there are discernable, identifiable relationships between religious affiliation and parent role perceptions. Specifically, using the Parent Role Questionnaire and Parent Behavior Questionnaire, this research examined the similarities and differences between Catholic and Jewish

parents' perceptions of the importance of the six identified PRDT parent role characteristics.

The results of this study support the PRDT in that all parents identified the six parenting role characteristics as important. No statistically significant differences were found between Catholic and Jewish parents' perceptions of the importance of the parental role characteristics. However, Catholic parents consistently rated their behavior frequency on all six parenting role characteristics higher than did the Jewish parents, although the differences were not statistically significant. A statistically significant difference was found between males and females in the level of importance for all of these characteristics. Catholic and Jewish females consistently rated all six characteristics as more important than did the Catholic and Jewish males participating in this study.

The results of this research further support the importance of the six parent role characteristics to parenting. This knowledge provides psychologists an understanding of how parents perceive and express their parenting role. Psychologists' structuring of their parent consultations around these core parenting values may prove beneficial in that psychologists can focus on what is important to parents. Additionally, understanding the differences between how males and females perceive their parenting role may prove to be extremely useful to psychologists working with families. Because effective parenting typically involves consistency between parents, psychologists' awareness of gender, as well as other, differences in parenting can assist them in helping parents develop and achieve mutual goals.

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Psychologists, educators, and parents agree that parents exert a powerful influence on their children, affecting children's behavior as well as their academic and social success (Deković & Janssens, 1992; Strage & Brandt, 1999). Parental influence begins at the child's birth and continues through adolescence, the college years and into adulthood. This commonly held belief is supported by a wealth of existing research that is both widely accepted and highly regarded. Such acceptance permeates not only the realm of the social sciences but also the fabric of judicial system of the United States. For example, Federal legislation in the form of PL99-457 and IDEA were enacted to establish a framework for parental participation in their children's growth and development (Mowder, Harvey & Pedro, 1995). While such legislation may be limited to children with special needs, it nonetheless helps validate the important role parents play in their child's development.

Several reviews document that parent-child bonding and parent-child relationships affect a child's developmental outcomes; warm and accepting parenting is consistently associated with more favorable outcomes, whereas hostile and rejecting parenting predicts less favorable outcomes for children (Losoya, Callor, Rowe, & Goldsmith, 1997). From their parents, children acquire both social cognitive skills and behavioral patterns that likely influence successful adaptation with their peers (Deković & Janssens, 1992). Studies on child-rearing and parent-child relationships indicate that children's prosocial dispositions and behaviors are greatly

affected by the parenting styles of their mothers and/or fathers (Deković & Janssens, 1992).

There is a considerable amount of research on parenting styles and parenting effects on academic success. Findings consistently suggest that warm yet demanding parenting is associated with intrinsic motivation for school success and strong self-regulatory skills. Conversely, extrinsic motivation, lower cognitive self-worth, and poorly developed self-regulatory skills are associated with more restrictive parenting (Strage & Brandt, 1999). The results of these studies point to the important contribution that parenting makes to a child's academic success.

To date, most of the research on parenting has focused on how parenting and parenting styles affect a child's development. But, what contributes to an individual's views of his or her role as parent? Several perspectives on parenting exist today. Galinsky (1982, 1987) delineates six parenting stages: Image Making Stage, Nurturing Stage, Authority Stage, Interpretive Stage, Interdependent Stage, and the Departure Stage. She believes parents move through these stages adapting and developing their parenting in relation to their children's needs. Baumrind (1971) offers a different perspective suggesting that there are three qualitatively different parenting styles based on parental control: permissive, authoritarian and authoritative.

There are many factors that influence and shape each person's view of the characteristics and roles of a parent. Mowder (1993) defines parenting and parent role development in her Parent Role Development Theory (PRDT). She theorizes that individuals begin learning what it means to be a parent when they are youngsters; their understanding is first learned from their own parents and families as well as their

early childhood social-cultural exposure. The concepts of the parenting role develop and change as individual gains life and relationship experiences. Additionally, Mowder believes that individuals have specific views of parenting and those perceptions are modified by different parenting needs experienced by children at different stages of development.

Mowder (1991) created the Parent Role Questionnaire (PRQ) which includes six identified parenting characteristics: (i) bonding (refers to the affection, love and care parents feel toward their children), (ii) discipline (refers to parents setting limits for children and assuring that the limits are responded and adhered to), (iii) education (refers to parental transmission of information in order to educate children) (iv) general welfare and protection (refers to parents assuring that their children are protected from harm and their general needs are met), (v) responsivity (refers to the extent to which parents respond to their children) and, (vi) sensitivity (refers to the ability of the parent to discern what the child is communicating and matching the parent response to the child's needs). Parents' perceptions of these characteristics are believed to be modified throughout parent development, significantly influenced by the changing needs of their children, their developing parent-child relationships, overall family dynamics and relevant social-cultural contexts. Parents rate these six characteristics based on their perceived associated level of importance. The resulting questionnaire data assesses parents' perceptions and views.

Mowder (2000) developed a second tool, the Parent Behavior Questionnaire (PBQ), based on the Parent Role Development Theory (PRDT). The PBQ targets activities based on their relative importance to parents. This questionnaire differs

from the PRQ because parental behaviors as opposed to parenting role characteristics are presented; this questionnaire prompts participants to rate the importance of specific parenting behaviors (e.g., answering your child's questions, encouraging your child academically, holding your child close to you, keeping your child in a safe place). Differentiating between what an individual conceptualizes and thinks about parenting and what that individual does as a parent is an important distinction to make because individuals' behaviors do not necessarily mirror their beliefs. The PBQ parenting behaviors correspond to the six identified parenting characteristics included in the PRQ.

The impact of social-cultural influences on parental role development and associated behaviors is a topic which to date has received little attention by researchers. Specifically, the impact of religious orientation on parental development has not been explored. This topic is important to investigate considering in the United States 95% of married couples and parents report having a religious affiliation (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001). This data suggests that religion is an important part of many families' lives and likely influences marital and/or parent-child relationships. Conversely, there is a low level of religiousness reported by psychologists. For example, 33% agree faith is the most important influence in their life compared to 72% of the general population (Bergin & Jenson, 1990). Such a marked disparity suggests that, when working with parents and families, psychologists may be less likely to factor in, or evaluate the impact religion may have on marriage and parenting.



Mahoney et al. (2001) reviewed 94 studies published in the 1980's and 1990's on religion and marital or parental functioning. Although the effects were small, they find religiousness is associated with a decrease in the risk of divorce and increased marital functioning. There is a modest association between Christian conservatism and greater endorsement and use of corporal punishment with preadolescents. Positive parenting and child adjustment are related to greater parental religiousness in isolated studies (Mahoney et al., 2001). Because of the mixed research results, as well as the potential importance of the relationship between parenting and religion, further research in this area is warranted and may be of assistance to psychologists working clinically with families.

#### *Statement of Purpose*

Minimal research exists on how parenting perceptions are affected by religiousness. The research that is available indicates that religion affects marital stability and parent-child relationships (Mahoney et al., 2001). Additional research may provide an understanding of the relationship between religion and parents' perception of the importance of parental role characteristics as well as subsequent parenting activities. With this information, psychologists may have an understanding of family dynamics, incorporating the relationship of religion to parenting, which can be used when working clinically with parents and assisting children. More specifically, the goal of this study is to identify the perceptions of parental roles held by a sample of Catholic and Jewish parents. The resulting data may guide psychologists when working with religious families in providing psychological services sensitive to this issue. Thus, this research examines the similarities and

differences between Catholic and Jewish parents' perceptions and behaviors related to parenting.

Two non-secular schools were contacted, a private Hebrew Day School and a Catholic parish school. A comparison was made to determine the respective parents' perceptions of the importance of the six parental characteristics: bonding, discipline, education, general welfare and protection, responsivity and sensitivity. The study also measured whether parents' behavior is related to their perceptions of the six parenting characteristics. The primary goal of this study is to examine the complexities of the parenting role and associated behaviors, and considers similarities and differences primarily based on religion. More specifically, the research questions are as follows:

1. Are there differences between Catholic and Jewish parents' perceptions of the importance of the six defined PRDT parent role characteristics?
2. What are the differences between Catholic and Jewish parents' perceptions of the importance of the six defined PRDT parent role characteristics as measured by the importance of associated behaviors described in the PBQ?
3. Are there relationships between Catholic and Jewish parents' perceptions of the importance of the six PRDT parent role characteristics as indicated in the PRQ and their perceptions of the importance of the associated behaviors as indicated in the PBQ?
4. Are there differences between Catholic and Jewish parents in how they view their parenting roles changing over the course of their child's developmental stages?
5. Based on gender, are there differences between Catholic and Jewish parents' perceptions of the importance of the six identified parent role characteristics and related parenting behaviors?

## Chapter II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews previous research related to parenting, parent development, parent-child relationships and the differences between maternal and paternal parenting. Additionally, the impact of religion on parenting, and the impact of cultural issues on parenting are addressed.

Much of the early parenting research focuses on child socialization or how parenting impacts child development. Notably, parenting style, as defined by Baumrind (1971) influenced many researchers in their studies of parenting and child development. Other theoretical perspectives on parenting exist today, including Galinsky's (1982, 1987) theory of six parenting stages and Mowder's (1993) Parent Role Development Theory (PRDT) that identifies six parent role characteristics as indicative of parenting. These theoretical perspectives are addressed throughout this chapter, along with further research exploring Mowder's PRDT.

Historically, research on parenting stems from two major positions, researchers interested in the development of different parenting practices, and those interested in global parenting characteristics or styles (Darling, 1993). Early research on children's socialization typically addressed parenting and parenting style. Both psychodynamic and behavioral researchers demonstrate interest in the influence of parents' behavior on child development. Psychodynamic or Freudian theorists argue that biological determinants are predominant in child development and are often in direct conflict with parental desires and societal requirements. They believe differences in child development are determined by the interaction between the