

Parental cultural orientation, shyness, and anxiety in Hispanic children: An exploratory study

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ABSTRACT

This study examined associations between parental cultural orientation, childhood shyness, and anxiety symptoms in a sample of Hispanic American children ($N = 127$). Parents completed measures of their level of acculturation, collectivism, and socialization goals, while children provided self-reports of anxiety symptoms and both parents and children provided reports of children's shyness. Results provided some support for the relationship between parental cultural orientation and expressed shyness in children. Additionally, results suggested that although increasing levels of parental collectivism are associated with more consistent levels of child shyness across social contexts; shyness with peers is uniquely associated with anxiety symptoms. Implications of these results for future research on social development and internalizing problems in Hispanic children are discussed.

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Introduction

Shyness refers to feelings of discomfort and inhibition that are specific to social situations (Van Ameringen et al., 1998). Shy children lack social initiative when in the presence of others and consistently exhibit quietness and self-consciousness. Conceptions of shyness have highlighted feelings of fear when encountering novel social situations as well as concerns about negative evaluation across familiar and unfamiliar social contexts (Rubin, Burgess, & Coplan, 2002). The related construct of behavioral inhibition focuses on a disposition to be wary and fearful of novel social and nonsocial situations whereas the construct of social withdrawal refers to isolating oneself from both familiar and unfamiliar peers (Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993; Rubin, Burgess, & Coplan, 2002; Van Ameringen, Mancini & Oakman, 1998).

Research conducted with North American children of European descent suggests an association between shyness and inhibition in early childhood and poor functional outcomes in later development, including peer rejection, isolation, and school failure (Rubin, Chen, McDougall, Bower & McKinnon, 1995). Inhibited children are often viewed as being less socially competent and mature relative to more assertive peers (Chen, Rubin & Li, 1995; Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993). Shy children and adolescents are more likely to report loneliness, social dissatisfaction, negative self-perceptions, anxiety, and depression (Fordham & Stevenson-Hinde, 1999; Masi et al., 2003; Rubin et al., 1995; Rubin, Chen & Hymel, 1993). Furthermore, longitudinal studies

suggest that shyness and inhibition are predictive of later anxiety disorders (Biederman, Rosenbaum, Bolduc-Murphy & Faraone, 1993; Hirshfeld-Becker et al., 2007; Rosenbaum, Biederman, Bolduc-Murphy & Faraone, 1993; Rubin & Burgess, 2001). Thus, in Western samples, shyness-inhibition is generally related to social difficulties and psychopathology in childhood and adolescence.

Conversely, studies of Chinese children suggest that shyness and inhibition may actually be adaptive. In Chinese culture, shy children are regarded as socially competent and understanding (Chen et al., 1998) and shy behavior is positively related to general self-esteem, leadership, school adjustment, academic achievement, peer acceptance, and teacher assessed competence (Chen, DeSouza, Chen & Wang, 2006; Chen, Rubin, Li & Li, 1999; Chen et al., 1998). Thus, unlike studies of shyness in Western cultures, studies of shyness in Chinese culture suggest that childhood shyness is associated with adequate school and social adjustment and positive developmental outcomes.

These contradictory findings suggest that shyness may be a culturally bound construct with differing adaptational meanings and consequences related to the cultural context. Kerr (2001) proposes that culturally influenced reactions to shy and inhibited behavior determine associated developmental outcomes. Similarly, cultural values provide the context that determines which childhood behaviors are viewed as problematic. For example, Weisz et al. (1988) found that Thai parents rated children's internalizing behaviors (including shyness), as less serious and worrisome than American parents. Additionally, the prevailing cultural context and corresponding child socialization practices likely influence general levels of shy-inhibited behaviors observed in children. Indeed, research has consistently suggested that Chinese children are more inhibited than North American children (Chen et al., 1998).

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Studying shyness within the framework of the cultural value paradigms, such as collectivism and individualism, may help explain divergent cross-cultural findings on the association between shyness and social functioning. In collectivistic Chinese societies, achieving and maintaining social order and interpersonal harmony are primary concerns (Chen et al., 1998). Behavioral inhibition is regarded as a sign of social maturity and individuals are encouraged to restrain personal desires for the benefit of the group (Chen et al., 1998). Group harmony may be facilitated by restraint, obedience, submission, and shy behavior, as opposed to more assertive behavior. Chinese children are encouraged to be dependent and cautious; and shy children are described as being “well-behaved” (Chen, 2000). Inhibited behavior may therefore be regarded as adaptive if it is less likely to disrupt and more likely to promote group harmony (Chen, 2000). In contrast to collectivistic cultures that value interdependence and self-regulation, individualistic cultures prioritize self-determination, autonomy, and assertive/competitive behaviors (Chen et al., 1999). Shyness and inhibition may therefore be less adaptive in individualistic cultures and more adaptive in collectivistic cultures.

Shyness has been studied extensively in European American populations, but research outside of this group has been focused primarily on Asian groups. However, like Asian cultures, Hispanic cultures are also collectivistic (Fulgini, Tseng & Lam, 1999; Raeff, Greenfield & Quiroz, 2000) and the adaptive nature of shy behavior may extend beyond Chinese culture to other collectivistic cultures. The socialization goals of Hispanic parents emphasize respect and teaching children how to display proper demeanor in public contexts (Leyendecker, Harwood, Lamb & Schölmerich, 2002). *Respeto* (respect) in Hispanic cultures is tied to qualities such as humility, submissiveness, and obedience and requires appropriate deference based on authority and age hierarchies (Marín & Marín, 1991). Children who are respectful and obedient are described as being well-socialized or “*bien educados*” (Hildebrand, Phenice, Gray, & Hines, 2000). As such, collectivistic values in Hispanic communities may promote a favorable view of childhood shyness and inhibited behavior on the part of parents. In particular, socialization goals emphasizing respect for elders may contribute to increased child shyness when interacting with adults.

We sought to extend the research on culture and childhood shyness to Hispanic families in three ways. First, we examined the association between measures of parental cultural orientation and levels of shyness in children. Cross-national differences in the levels and correlates of child shyness have been interpreted as evidence of the developmental consequences of collectivistic versus individualistic values, yet the association between specific cultural factors and child shyness has not been directly tested. Cultural values are transmitted from parents to children in a variety of ways that profoundly shape child development. Parents with a more collectivistic orientation may raise their children in a way that emphasizes respect and restraint to promote harmony while discouraging assertive behaviors that call attention to the self. These socialization goals would result in higher levels of shy and inhibited behavior. In contrast, parents who hold more individualistic values may emphasize the competencies of assertion and independence needed for personal achievement while discouraging shyness and inhibition (Chen, 2000). To evaluate this hypothesis, we examined the association between child shyness and indices of parental cultural orientation including collectivistic values, parental socialization goals, and acculturation. While previous research has focused on the construct of collectivism to understand the adaptive nature of shyness, the current project explores associations between shyness and three dimensions of parental culture. Acculturation to United States culture is considered a global construct indicating the extent to which parents adopt the beliefs and behaviors common in the United States. We therefore explore whether a general affinity for American culture is associated with children's social development. Parental collectivism is assessed in the current study in order to examine the

associations between this specific cultural dimension and children's shyness empirically. Finally, the parental socialization goal of respect for elders is included as a hypothesized specific parental goal that may impact children's shyness. These three parental cultural factors were included in the current study in order to more fully understand how cultural constructs, both distally and proximally related to shyness, may impact children's social behavior. We hypothesized that children's shy behavior would be positively associated with parental collectivism and socialization goals of respect for elders and negatively associated with acculturation to American culture.

Our second aim was to examine how parental cultural orientation and the social context influence shyness in Hispanic children. On the one hand, parental collectivistic values emphasizing group harmony may make children's shy and inhibited behavior more likely across social interactions. In fact, previous research provides support for the cross-situational stability of children's social behavior with peers (e.g., Gazelle et al., 2005; Schneider, Younger, Smith, & Freeman, 1998). Regardless of the specific setting, reserved and inhibited child behavior may lead to serene and agreeable relations with others. Conversely, in collectivistic cultures, social behavior may be largely shaped by the role obligations inherent in the relational context (Heine, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and the hierarchical nature of children's social relationships may therefore influence children's shyness. In vertical collectivist cultures (including Asian and Hispanic societies) group harmony is valued, but the relative status of individuals in relationships is also emphasized (Triandis, 1996). In these contexts, children's social behavior and shyness may be context-dependent; more evident when interacting with adults due to a greater demand for respect and restraint than during peer to peer interactions. Thus, the current aim centered on exploring the context-dependence of children's shyness by examining the cross-situational consistency of children's shy behavior when interacting with adults and peers. We tested the hypothesis that parental collectivism is positively associated with increased levels of shyness across relational contexts along with the competing hypothesis that parental emphasis on respect for elders is associated with increased levels of shyness in this specific context.

Lastly, we examined the relationship between shyness and anxiety symptoms in Hispanic children. Because shy behavior may be valued and directly socialized in collectivistic traditions, shyness may not be associated with emotional distress among children raised in this cultural context. Conversely, as parental individualistic values increase, shyness may be more likely to be associated with compromised emotional functioning as found in research on shyness in European American children. This research question is driven by our desire to explore the cultural relativism of the relation between shyness and anxiety. Whereas shy behaviors in Western cultures may imply internal discomfort or distress, it is possible that culturally appropriate inhibited behavior reinforced through socialization practices may not necessarily reflect emotional distress. Understanding the distinction between children's behavior and emotions and the extent to which culture influences their meaning and association is central to this aim. Therefore, we hypothesized that indices of parental cultural orientation may moderate the relationship between children's reports of shy behaviors and their subjective experience of symptoms of anxiety.

The current study therefore extends research on cultural differences in childhood shyness in multiple ways. Prior research has found differences in the level and developmental correlates of shyness between non-Western and Western children and has examined how shyness is associated with emotional functioning within a given group. The current study seeks to build on the literature by explicitly testing the contribution of specific parental cultural factors on the expression of childhood shyness within Hispanic families and by examining how these parental cultural factors may impact the relation between childhood shyness and anxiety. First, we examined the relationship between parental acculturation, collectivistic cultural values, and socialization goals and reported shyness in Hispanic children. Second,

we examined how collectivistic culture and socialization goals emphasizing respect for elders are associated with the consistency of children's shy behavior in interactions with adults versus peers. Third, we examined whether shyness in Hispanic children is differentially related to symptoms of anxiety depending on parental cultural orientation.

Method

Participants

Participants included 127 Hispanic American children ages 8 to 11 ($M = 9.48$, $SD = .93$) and their parent (83.5% mothers), recruited from a public elementary school in Southern California. Of the children participating in the study, 51.2% were female and 48.8% were male. All children in the sample were identified as Hispanic/Latino based on the demographic information provided by the parent. The majority of children were born in the United States (88.4%), while those remaining were born in Mexico (9.9%), or another Latin American country (1.7%). The majority of parents were born in Mexico (57.5% of mothers and 68.8% of fathers), El Salvador (15% of mothers and 14.3% of fathers), and other Latin American countries (4.2% of mothers and 3.5% of fathers), while the remainder were born in the United States (23.3% of mothers and 13.4% of fathers). The median annual household income was \$30,000–\$40,000, with an average of 4.81 ($SD = 1.29$) people supported by this income. For the majority of families, Spanish (43.4%) or both English and Spanish (42.6%) were the primary language(s) spoken in the home, while English was the primary language for the remaining families (13.9%).

Procedure

The researchers made brief recruitment announcements in classrooms and distributed consent forms, parent questionnaires, and recruitment fliers to children. All study questionnaires were made available to participants in English and Spanish. When an existing Spanish translation of a measure was not available, translations were created through a procedure of translation, back-translation and subsequent reconciliation of discrepancies by a translation team including the first author and two bilingual elementary school teachers.

Children were asked to deliver the study materials to their parent or guardian and to return completed materials if their family wanted to participate. After providing written consent, adult participants completed the study's measures independently and returned questionnaires in sealed envelopes delivered to the researchers by their children. Children received a small gift (e.g., pencils, stickers) when parent consent forms and questionnaires were returned to the researchers. Consistent with rates of participation in school-based research studies (Blom-Hoffman et al., 2009), the overall response rate among children and families invited to participate in the study was 51%. Child participants completed the study measures in groups at their school after written parental consent and child assent were acquired. Children were read a standard set of instructions that reminded them that there were no correct or incorrect answers and that their responses would not be shared with others outside of the research team. A research assistant supervised the children, read all instructions and items aloud, and answered questions as necessary. Children recorded their responses privately on their response sheets. Families received a merchandise gift certificate valued at \$15 once data was collected from both the parent and child participant.

Measures

Shyness

The Children's Shyness Questionnaire (CSQ; Crozier, 1995) is a 26-item questionnaire designed to measure the trait of childhood shyness with peers and adults in familiar and unfamiliar contexts.

The questionnaire was modified from its original form, which only allows children to respond with "yes" or "no," to allow children to indicate how often the statement is true for them on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 *never* to 5 *always*, with a response of 3 indicating that the item is "sometimes" true for them. Sample items from the measure include, "I am usually shy in a group of people," "I feel shy when the teacher speaks to me," and "It is easy for me to make friends." Crozier (1995) has reported good internal consistency reliability for the CSQ ($\alpha = .82$) in two samples of children ages 8 to 12. In these samples of Caucasian children, the CSQ has also demonstrated concurrent validity through its association with children's ratings of self-worth (Crozier, 1995). The Children's Shyness Questionnaire – Parent Report (CSQ-P) is an adaptation of the CSQ created for this study. All items on the CSQ-P are identical to the items found on the child version, except that items have been reworded so that parents can answer the questions about their children. In the present study, the parent version of the CSQ was significantly correlated with the child version of the measure ($r = .33$, $p < .001$) and internal consistency for the CSQ ($\alpha = .85$) and CSQ-P ($\alpha = .89$) was good.

Context-Dependent Shyness

The Context-Dependent Shyness Questionnaire – Children/Adults (CDS-C/A) is an 18-item measure created for this study to assess the extent to which children's shyness varies by context. On this measure, children are instructed to consider their behavior when in the presence of familiar and unfamiliar others and rate nine items to indicate how accurate a statement is for them. For example, on the CDS-C children are asked to consider times when they come into contact with familiar peers (in class), unfamiliar peers (at the park), and both familiar and unfamiliar peers (a party) and to report on their behavior across these situations with other children their age. Sample items from the measure include, "I have trouble looking them in the eye" and "I am usually quiet." Children indicate their response by circling the words *very false* (1), *sort of false* (2), *sort of true* (3), or *very true* (4). On the CDS-A, children are asked to consider times when they may be around familiar and unfamiliar adults (e.g., at school, a restaurant, and a family party) and they are asked to rate the same nine items found on the CDS-C while considering how accurate the statement is for them when they are with adults. Item content was derived from established measures of shyness. Only the instructions given to the children and the grammar were manipulated as necessary to obtain a measure of the context-dependence of shyness. The CDS-C was significantly correlated with the CSQ ($r = .53$, $p < .001$), as was the CDS-A ($r = .52$, $p < .001$). In our sample, the internal consistencies of the CDS-C ($\alpha = .77$) and CDS-A ($\alpha = .79$) were acceptable.

Parental collectivism

The 9-item Kin and Neighbors subscale from the Revised Individualism Collectivism (INDCOL-KN) Scale (Hui & Yee, 1994) was used as an indicator of parental collectivistic orientation. The Kin and Neighbors subscale measures collectivistic orientation toward relating to family, extended family, and non-kin acquaintances, with each item rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 *Strongly Disagree* to 6 *Strongly Agree*. A sample item reads, "I can count on my relatives for help if I find myself in any kind of trouble." The original INDCOL scale (Hui, 1988) has demonstrated test-retest reliability ranging from .62 to .69 and internal consistency reliability ranging from .41 to .76 for individual subscales. In our sample, the internal consistency reliability of the subscale used was .51, which is similar to the subscale's internal consistency as reported in previous studies ($\alpha = .58$; Hui & Yee, 1994). Attempts to improve the scale's internal consistency reliability by including fewer items only resulted in a marginal improvement. As an indicator of convergent validity in our study, immigrant parents reported higher levels of collectivistic

values ($M = 3.30$, $SD = .78$) than U.S.-born parents ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .73$), $t(119) = -2.18$, $p < .05$.

Parental acculturation

The Abbreviated Multidimensional Acculturation Scale (Zea, Asner-Self, Birman & Buki, 2003) is designed to measure a participant's level of acculturation; the process in which members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs and behaviors of another group. In the current study we utilized the 6-item U.S. Cultural Competence Scale (AMAS-U.S. Comp) of the AMAS, a global measure of contact with American culture. Items are rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 *not at all* to 4 *extremely well*. Sample items from this scale include, "How well do you know popular American TV shows" and "How well do you know popular American newspapers and magazines." The AMAS has demonstrated good internal consistency in a sample of Latino immigrant adults as well as in a sample of Latino college students (α ranging from .90 to .97) and demonstrates good convergent and discriminant validity with measures of ethnic identity and affinity for Latino and Anglo American cultures (Zea et al., 2003). Zea et al. (2003) also reported significantly higher scores on the U.S. Cultural Competence subscale in U.S.-born Latinos relative to immigrant Latinos. Internal consistency for this scale was high, with an alpha coefficient of .93 in our data.

Parental socialization goal of respect for elders

The socialization goal of respect for elders was assessed with the 10-item *Filial Piety Scale* from the Parent Beliefs Questionnaire (PBQ-FP; Pearson & Rao, 2003). The PBQ is designed to measure parent's socialization goals for their children and their beliefs about parenting. Parents rate the importance of the goals presented for the socialization of their children by using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 *not at all important* to 4 *very important*. Sample items from the filial piety subscale include, "I want my child to be obedient" and "I want my child to listen to his/her elders." Originally developed with a cross-national sample of parents in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom, the PBQ filial piety subscale has demonstrated internal consistency reliability ranging from .75 to .84, with significantly higher filial piety subscale scores reported by parents from Hong Kong relative to parents from the United Kingdom. The internal consistency of this scale in the current sample was good ($\alpha = .82$).

Child symptoms of anxiety

The total sum from the 39-item Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children (MASC; March, 1997) was used as the measure of children's symptoms of anxiety. Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging

from 0 *never true about me* to 3 *often true about me*. The MASC is an empirically derived instrument that provides a reliable and valid assessment of anxiety symptoms. Internal reliability coefficients for children age 8 to 11 ($\alpha = .87$) and test-retest reliability coefficients ($r = .93$) are excellent (March, 1997). The MASC has demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .84$ –.86) and measurement equivalence in Hispanic and European American youth (Varela, Sanchez-Sosa, Biggs, & Luis, 2008). In the present study, internal consistency for the MASC was good ($\alpha = .88$).

Results

Parental cultural orientation, socialization goals, and shyness in children

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for study measures are presented in Table 1. All analyses reported were conducted using cases with complete data. In our sample of Hispanic American children, parental acculturation ($r = -.20$, $p < .05$) was negatively correlated with child-reported shyness as measured by the CSQ. Parental acculturation was also significantly and negatively correlated with parent-reported child shyness on the CSQ-P ($r = -.29$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, parental collectivism ($r = .19$, $p < .05$) and the socialization goal of respect for elders ($r = .20$, $p < .05$) were positively correlated with the CSQ-P.

Two hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to explore the relationship between parental cultural values, socialization goals, and child shyness according to parent and child report (see Table 2). Child age and sex were examined as potentially important covariates, but neither was correlated with children's shyness and they were therefore not entered in the regression models. Predictors were entered into the regression equation in the following order: Parental acculturation (AMAS-U.S. Comp), parental collectivism (INDCOL-KN), and parental socialization goal of respect for elders (PBQ-FP). More distal cultural variables were entered prior to variables thought to be more proximally related to the socialization of child shyness.

In the first step, parental acculturation predicted parent-reported child shyness ($\beta = -.28$, $p < .01$) but was not significantly related to children's self-reported shyness ($\beta = -.18$, $p < .10$). In the second step, parental collectivistic values did not significantly predict parent-reported ($\beta = .16$, $p < .10$) or self-reported shyness ($\beta = .01$, $p = ns$) in children. In the third step, the socialization goal of respect for elders was not significantly related to child ($\beta = .04$, $p = ns$) or parent reports ($\beta = .12$, $p = ns$) of child shyness.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for primary measures.

Variable	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Child shyness											
1. CSQ	124	2.69	.59	–							
2. CSQ-P	122	2.71	.63	.33**	–						
3. CDS-C	121	2.10	.60	.53**	.30**	–					
4. CDS-A	121	2.25	.64	.52**	.22*	.63**	–				
Parental culture											
5. AMAS-U.S. Comp	121	2.59	.78	–.20*	–.29**	–.13	–.13	–			
6. INDCOL-KN	122	3.20	.77	.02	.19*	.10	.03	–.13	–		
7. PBQ-FP	122	3.32	.54	.07	.20*	.13	.14	–.25**	.15†	–	
Child anxiety											
8. MASC	120	52.69	18.04	.49**	.30**	.52**	.33**	–.18†	.20*	.13	–

Note. CSQ = Children's Shyness Questionnaire; CSQ-P = Children's Shyness Questionnaire – Parent Report; CDS-C = Context-Dependent Shyness – Children; CDS-A = Context-Dependent Shyness – Adults; AMAS-U.S. Comp = U.S. Cultural Competence subscale from the Abbreviated Multidimensional Acculturation Scale; INDCOL-KN = Parental collectivism as assessed by the Kin and Neighbors subscale of the INDCOL; PBQ-FP = Socialization goal of respect for elders as measured by the Filial Piety subscale of the Parent Beliefs Questionnaire; MASC = Total sum from Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children.

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 2
Hierarchical regression analyses for self-report and parent report of child shyness.

Variable	CSQ			CSQ-P		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Step 1						
AMAS-U.S. Comp	-.14	.07	-.18 [†]	-.23	.07	-.28**
Step 2						
AMAS-U.S. Comp	-.13	.07	-.18 [†]	-.22	.07	-.26**
INDCOL-KN	.01	.07	.01	.13	.07	.16 [†]
Step 3						
AMAS-U.S. Comp	-.13	.07	-.18	-.19	.07	-.24*
INDCOL-KN	.01	.07	.01	.12	.07	.14
PBQ-FP	.04	.11	.04	.14	.11	.12

Note. CSQ = Children's Shyness Questionnaire; CSQ-P = Children's Shyness Questionnaire – Parent Report; AMAS-U.S. Comp = U.S. Cultural Competence subscale from the Abbreviated Multidimensional Acculturation Scale; INDCOL-KN = Parental collectivism as assessed by the Kin and Neighbors subscale of the INDCOL; PBQ-FP = Socialization goal of respect for elders as measured by the Filial Piety subscale of the Parent Belief's Questionnaire.

[†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Consistency in child shyness with adults versus children

To examine the consistency of children's shyness across relational contexts, we tested two competing hypotheses. First, we tested the hypothesis that more traditional, collectivistic parents would rear children who displayed more consistency in their shy behavior when interacting with adults and other children. Secondly, we tested the hypothesis that parents emphasizing respect for adults would rear children who displayed higher levels of shyness with adults relative to peers and would therefore display greater variability in their shy behavior in these two contexts. In one regression model, children's reported shyness with other children (CDS-C) was the dependent variable, predicted by children's reported shyness with adults (CDS-A), parental collectivistic values (INDCOL-KN), and the interaction of parental collectivism and children's reported shyness with adults. To address potential problems of multicollinearity, centered predictor variables were used and the interaction term was the product of these centered variables (Aiken & West, 1991). In this model, the interaction between parental collectivism and children's reported shyness with adults significantly predicted children's reported shyness with other children ($\beta = .18, p = .02$). In a second regression model examining the potential moderating effect of parental socialization goals on the consistency of children's shyness, an emphasis on respect for elders did not moderate the relationship between children's shyness in these different contexts ($\beta = -.06, p = ns$). Therefore, the consistency of children's shy behavior with adults and peers appeared to differ based on parental level of collectivism rather than on parental emphasis on respect for adults.

Post-hoc probing of significant effects (Holmbeck, 2002) was conducted to aid in the interpretation of the moderating role of parental collectivism on the relationship between children's shyness with adults versus children. The association between children's shyness with children and shyness with adults was examined separately for those high and low on parental collectivism (one *SD* above and below the mean, respectively). As seen in Fig. 1, although shyness with adults was significantly and positively associated with shyness with children across contexts, shyness was more consistent across contexts for children high on parental level of collectivism ($\beta = .75, p < .001$) relative to children low on parental collectivism ($\beta = .40, p = .001$). Thus, there appeared to be greater contextual variation of shyness among children in the low collectivism group. As such, collectivistic values were associated with greater consistency in shy behavior across adult and peer contexts, but parental goals emphasizing respect for adults were not associated with higher levels of shyness when interacting with adults relative to peers. In the overall sample, children reported higher levels of shyness with adults ($M = 2.25, SD = .64$) than with other children ($M = 2.10, SD = .60$), $t(119) = -3.19, p < .01$.

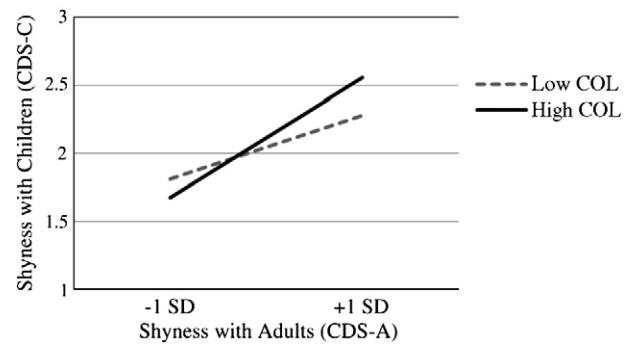


Fig. 1. Association between shyness with children and shyness with adults as moderated by parental level of collectivism. Note: High parental collectivism is defined as 1 *SD* above the mean of collectivism whereas low parental collectivism is defined as 1 *SD* below the mean.

Child shyness and associated subjective distress: Anxiety symptoms

A series of hierarchical regression analyses were employed to examine associations between shyness and anxiety symptoms and to determine whether the symptomatic correlates of shyness varied by cultural orientation. Three multiple regression models were examined utilizing parental acculturation, collectivism, and an emphasis on respect for elders as cultural factors that might moderate the experience of distress associated with shyness. In each model, control variables of children's age and sex were entered in the first step. Children's reported shyness when in the presence of other children (CDS-C) and children's reported shyness when in the presence of adults (CDS-A) were entered in the second step. In the subsequent step, the relevant cultural variable (AMAS-U.S. Comp, INDCOL-KN, or PBQ-FB) was entered into the regression equation. In the final step, we entered the interaction between CDS-C and the relevant cultural variable as well as the interaction between CDS-A and the relevant cultural variable. Centered predictor variables were used in all models and interaction terms were created by multiplying the centered variables. For each set of multiple regression analyses, children's self-reported anxiety symptoms (MASC total score) were examined as the dependent variable. Hierarchical models were created to allow for an examination of the unique effects of demographic variables, shyness, and parental cultural variables on children's reports of anxiety symptoms. Separate models were created for each of the cultural variables, as the sample size was not large enough to examine all cultural variables and their interactions with children's shyness within a single regression model.

The first two steps in each of these models were identical. In the first step, results indicated that girls ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) self-reported more anxiety symptoms. In the second step, children's reported shyness with other children predicted self-reported anxiety symptoms ($\beta = .52, p < .001$) but shyness with adults did not. Variables in Steps 1 and 2 accounted for 34% of the variance in child reports of anxiety, $F(4, 111) = 13.70, p < .001$.

In the third step of each model, we entered the relevant cultural variable. In the first model, there was no main effect of parental acculturation on child-reported anxiety. In the second model, parental collectivism was positively associated with children's self-reported anxiety ($\beta = .16, p = .05$). There was no main effect of parental emphasis on respect for elders on child reports of subjective anxiety. In the fourth step of each model, there were no significant interactions between cultural variables and child shyness with adults or children in predicting child self-reported anxiety symptoms. Overall, these results suggest that children's self-reported shyness with peers, as opposed to shyness with adults, is the strongest predictor of children's reports of anxious symptoms. One finding suggested that parental cultural orientation predicted children's symptoms of anxiety. Parents reporting high levels of collectivism tended to have children who self-

reported higher levels of anxiety symptoms. None of the three measures of parental cultural orientation moderated the association between children's shyness and subjective anxiety (Table 3).

Discussion

We examined the relationship between parental cultural orientation and the levels, patterns, and symptom correlates of shyness in Hispanic children. In bivariate analyses, parental level of acculturation to American culture was negatively associated with both child and parent reports of children's shyness and, in the case of parent-reported shyness, this relationship persisted in multivariate analyses. Parents reporting less familiarity with and affinity for American culture reported more shyness in their children and their children also self-reported more shy behavior than children of more highly acculturated parents. Although there were bivariate associations between level of parental collectivism and socialization goals emphasizing respect and parent-reported child shyness, this association did not remain in multivariate analyses. Thus, our findings provided some preliminary support for the influence of parental cultural orientation on levels of reported child shyness.

Extending previous cross-national research in childhood shyness, our results point to dimensions of parental acculturation and value dimensions that may drive observed racial, ethnic, and national differences in patterns of children's social relatedness. We sought to explicitly test associations between cultural factors and children's shyness within a sample of Hispanic families. These results suggest that the extent to which Hispanic parents have adopted the values, attitudes, and behaviors of the United States may influence their children's shyness. Contrary to our expectation that the dimensions of collectivism and parental socialization goals emphasizing respect for elders would be more proximally related to children's shyness, the current findings suggest that a more general affinity for American culture on the part of parents is associated with lower levels of child shyness. Future research should replicate these findings and determine how these parental cultural orientations shape specific socialization practices that modulate children's social conduct and shy-inhibited behavior. The use of multiple methods of assessment in addition to qualitative research may be particularly useful for refining the conceptualization and assessment of the cultural constructs most central for understanding parenting within Hispanic families. The specific processes by which cultural forces shape parent and child

behavior remain an important area of inquiry that will be essential in advancing this line of research.

Exploratory analyses examining the context-dependence of children's shy behavior suggested that higher collectivistic parental cultural orientation was associated with more consistent child shyness across adult and peer contexts. Children of parents reporting lower levels of collectivism modulated their shy behavior to a greater extent depending on the relational context. Conversely, parental values emphasizing respect for elders were not associated with differential levels of reported shyness with adults versus peers. These results are consistent with previous interpretations of the adaptational nature of children's shy behavior in more collectivistic societies (e.g., Chen et al., 1999; Chen et al., 1998) and further suggest that within a Hispanic population, shyness across social interactions may be valued. We did not find support for the notion that an emphasis on respect for elders, consistent with vertical collectivism, was associated with increased levels of childhood shyness with adults relative to peers. Parental collectivism and socialization goals were included in this analysis as it was believed that they may represent specific cultural factors that influence the consistency of social behavior. Our findings suggest that an overall emphasis on group harmony and connectedness is associated with the more consistent displays of shy behavior with adults and children.

When examining the symptom correlates of shyness, we noted that only children's self-reported shyness with other children was associated with self-reports of anxiety symptoms. It seems that it is shyness in interacting with peers, irrespective of high levels of shyness with adults, which is more strongly associated with subjective feelings of anxiety or distress in children. But contrary to our hypotheses, parental cultural orientation did not moderate the relationship between children's reports of shyness and levels of associated anxiety. These results are important in light of our finding that a collectivistic cultural orientation tends to be associated with greater consistency of shyness across contexts. Thus, there was some evidence that Hispanic children living in the United States who come from less acculturated families with greater emphasis on collectivism may display higher and more consistent levels of shyness with peers and adults, but it is shyness with peers that predicts risk for subjective feelings of anxiety.

These findings can be interpreted as supporting the problem suppression-facilitation model of cultural influence on child psychopathology proposed by Weisz, McCarty, Eastman, Chaiyasit and Suwanlert (1997). These investigators argue that cultural forces directly influence the likelihood of particular childhood emotional and behavioral problems. Cultural forces may manifest as social pressure or direct punishment that suppresses the development of behavior that is disapproved, while facilitating the development of culturally acceptable behavior through teaching, modeling, or reward (Weisz et al., 1997). Through such suppression-facilitation processes, socialization in a less acculturated context may produce increased levels of shy-inhibited behavior in comparison to the behavior of children socialized in a more acculturated context. Our findings indicate that while shyness exhibited across relational contexts may be shaped by normative cultural priorities and socialization experiences, shy-inhibited behaviors with peers nonetheless have concomitant subjective distress correlates. Thus, while shy and reserved behavior in Hispanic children may be consistent with certain cultural scripts, shy Hispanic children may be at risk for the types of emotional difficulties observed in shy European American children. Although it is important to refrain from overpathologizing normative social behaviors in diverse groups, it is equally important to recognize that culturally influenced behavioral patterns may at times have negative implications for emotional functioning.

Recent research by Chen, Cen, Li, and He (2005) suggests that in China, shyness has become less adaptive over time and they propose that changes towards a capitalistic system have contributed to the

Table 3
Hierarchical regression analyses for variables predicting children's anxiety symptoms.

Variable	MASC		
	B	SE	β
Step 1			
Child age	−2.32	1.81	−.12
Child sex	7.39	3.28	.21*
Step 2			
CDS-C	15.94	3.09	.52***
CDS-A	−.13	2.93	−.01
Step 3 (Model 1)			
AMAS-U.S. Comp	−2.19	1.83	−.10
Step 3 (Model 2)			
INDCOL-KN	3.65	1.85	.16*
Step 3 (Model 3)			
PBQ-FP	2.56	2.58	.08

Note. Sex (boy = 0, girl = 1); CDS-C = Context-Dependent Shyness – Child; CDS-A = Context-Dependent Shyness – Adult; AMAS-U.S. Comp = U.S. Cultural Competence subscale from the Abbreviated Multidimensional Acculturation Scale; INDCOL-KN = Parental collectivism as assessed by the Kin and Neighbors subscale of the INDCOL; PBQ-FP = Socialization goal of respect for elders as measured by the Filial Piety subscale of the Parent Belief's Questionnaire; MASC = Total sum from Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children.

* $p < .05$.

*** $p < .001$.

adaptive value of shyness diminishing. Cross-national research by Hart et al. (2000) also suggests that across Chinese, U.S., and Russian youth, social reticence is associated with low peer sociometric ratings. Other recent research by Chen and Tse (2008) suggests that within a Canadian sample, shyness is more strongly associated with peer rejection and victimization in European Canadian children relative to Chinese Canadian children. While we have emphasized the importance of considering parental cultural orientation and the dyadic interpersonal context when studying shyness, it is also important to note that the majority of parents participating in this study were immigrants. It is likely that examining the divergence between the socialization goals and practices of immigrant parents and the prevailing social context children experience in the United States is central to understanding the adaptive nature of shyness. In a related manner, it is important to consider that the current study was conducted with a population residing in Southern California, a social context with a high proportion of immigrant and non-immigrant Hispanics. Given a context where Hispanic cultural values and parenting practices are more normative, children's shy behavior may have been more acceptable relative to other parts of the United States. However, given that shyness with peers was nonetheless associated with anxiety in what may have been a more accepting social context, future research should explore how shyness impacts the mental health adjustment of Hispanic children in areas where they are a minority of the population. In fact, findings about the possible negative emotional correlates of shyness may be even more pronounced in such areas.

While in the current study we have focused on understanding the acceptability and impact of children's shyness as a function of culture, it is important to consider that responses to children's behavior are determined by multiple factors in addition to culture. For example, Chen et al. (2005) noted that in earlier cohorts, girls were rated as being shy more often relative to boys. However, this gender difference appears to have attenuated over time. Similarly, age has been identified as a significant factor that impacts the acceptability of children's shy behavior, with shyness being more strongly related to peer rejection as children mature (Chen & Tse, 2008). A child's greater socioeconomic context may also be an important influence on the acceptability of social behavior. Future research should examine how factors other than culture (e.g., parental education, socioeconomic status) are associated with the expression of children's shy behavior. Understanding the development and consequences of children's shy behavior therefore requires a careful examination of the interaction between individual characteristics and differing parental, peer, and community socialization contexts.

Consistent with concerns about internalizing problem facilitation among Hispanic children, previous research has noted that Mexican and Mexican-American children report higher levels of anxiety than European American children (Varela et al., 2004). Similarly, a meta-analytic study by Twenge and Nolen-Hoeksema (2002) found that Hispanic children generally reported higher levels of depressive symptoms than children from other racial/ethnic backgrounds. Epidemiological studies have also suggested that Mexican-American adolescents report relatively high rates of anxiety (Glover, Pumariega, Holzer, Wise & Rodriguez, 1999) and depression (Glover et al., 1999; Swanson, Linskey, Quintero-Salinas & Pumariega, 1992). Cross-ethnic studies reporting elevated rates of internalizing psychopathology among Hispanic American children relative to their European American peers may be explained in part by differences in familial cultural context. Indeed, our data indicated that children of highly collectivistic Hispanic parents self-reported more anxiety symptoms than children of less collectivistic parents.

However, key methodological limitations in the use of self-report measures may temper the interpretation of findings from the current and previous studies. It has been argued that cultural values and communication norms may result in inflated scores on standard measures of psychopathology among Hispanics. For example, *simpatía*,

a Mexican cultural value referring to a sense of empathizing with others, respecting others, and remaining agreeable, was found to be associated with increased endorsement of anxiety symptoms (Varela et al., 2004). In the present study, the same values assessed by cultural orientation measures may likewise influence response styles on child behavior ratings scales. Although parental reports of child behaviors may reflect the actual occurrence of child behavior, it is possible that cultural orientation may influence parental reports of children's behavior. Additionally, while the participant recruitment rate of 51% is similar to that of other school-based studies (e.g., Blom-Hoffman et al., 2009), it is possible that participation varied systematically based on level of acculturation or other socio demographic variables, such as immigrant status. As a result, it will be important for future research to engage families and increase participation rates in research in order to ensure that results are representative of the population.

If parents with more collectivistic orientations indeed value shy child behavior, then parental (and perhaps child) reports may be contaminated by social desirability in this culturally-specific manner. Higher endorsement of shy behavior and anxious symptoms among children from more collectivistic and less acculturated contexts owing to response tendencies may have limited our ability to find a moderating effect of culture on the relationship between shyness and children's emotional functioning. Similarly, cultural influences may shape parent judgments about which behaviors are appropriate to report, how parents determine what "usual" behavior or levels of behavior are, and how parents construe items in the research instruments. For example, the *Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children* (March, 1997) includes items such as, "I try hard to obey my parents and teachers" and "I avoid going to places without my family." While these items may reflect anxious behavior in European American children, they resemble items found on measures of cultural values. In contrast, recent research by Gazelle (2008) found a marginally significant difference in the percentage of children classified as being high on peer ratings of anxious solitude, with Latino children being classified as such by peers at higher rates relative to non-Latino peers. Thus, it would appear that elevated rates of shyness/anxiety among Hispanic children may also be perceived by peers.

While the inclusion of measures of parental cultural orientation in order to explicitly test associations between cultural values and children's shyness is a strength of this study, the current findings must be qualified due to the low internal consistency of the measure of collectivism used. While the relatively small number of items in the Kin and Neighbors subscale of the INDCOL scale (Hui & Yee, 1994) may be one factor contributing to its low internal consistency (Helms, Henze, Sass, & Mifsud, 2006), a review by Oyserman, Coon, Kimmelmeier (2002) suggests that the reliability of measures of collectivism has been a major challenge in this area of research. In the current exploratory study, the low internal consistency of the collectivism scale may have limited its utility in the analyses. Published research studies that assess collectivism have reported internal consistency coefficients well below established cutoffs, with an estimated one half of studies utilizing scales with poor reliability (Hui, Cheng, & Gan, 2003; Oyserman et al., 2002). It has been suggested that due to the complexity of the construct, collectivism is difficult to assess reliably. On a practical level, situational demands such as the availability of relatives in the United States or access to other members of one's community may limit the expression of collectivism. The internal consistency reliability of measures may therefore decrease due to the fact that despite collectivistic values and beliefs, some items assessing collectivistic behaviors are not endorsed. Additionally, collectivism refers to a world view about interpersonal relationships that encompasses multiple facets. For example, researchers have described vertical and horizontal dimensions of collectivism (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) and collectivism in relation to kin and non-kin (Hui, 1988; Rhee, Uleman, & Lee, 1996). Because it is comprised of multifaceted values, beliefs, and behaviors, collectivism

may manifest differently across individuals. The assessment of collectivism requires that measures capture this complexity by inquiring about beliefs and behaviors across diverse social situations and interactions.

However, collectivism is only one of multiple influences on attitudes towards interpersonal relationships and improved methods of assessment are needed in order to capture both the complexity and consistency of collectivism. In order to advance our understanding of the impact of cultural variables on children's social and emotional functioning, it is first necessary to employ measures of cultural constructs that are valid and psychometrically sound. As noted above, the use of multiple methods of assessment and qualitative studies represent important avenues for improving the assessment of cultural constructs. Through such methods, it may be possible to identify more specific dimensions (e.g., behavioral control, deference, conscientiousness, and obligation) which likely underlie a more general construct like collectivism. By identifying these specific dimensions, we may be better able to assess the dimensions reliably while also furthering our understanding of the processes by which these dimensions influence child behavior.

Despite the limitations of this study, the results provide preliminary information about the complex associations between parental cultural orientation, children's social behavior, and children's experiences of emotional distress. While additional research is needed to replicate and extend the findings in the current study, results from this research can be applied to our understanding of children's social behavior and inform our approach to intervention. In particular, findings from the current and previous studies suggest that professionals who work with immigrant and non-immigrant Hispanic children (e.g., teachers, mental health professionals, and pediatricians) need to consider the adaptive nature of children's shy behavior within their specific contexts. The culturally competent and sensitive evaluation of shyness must consider the cultural perspective of the behavior, how the behavior impacts the child's functioning within their environment, and whether the behavior is associated with internal feelings of distress. Similar to the process López (1997, 2000) has advocated for in the culturally competent delivery of mental health services, professionals working with shy children must approach the child's behavior from multiple perspectives. For example, when considering the need for intervention with a child exhibiting shyness in the classroom, it would be important to consider how this behavior is viewed by the child's caregivers and the family's larger cultural context. Subsequently, one must consider how this behavior impacts the child's ability to function in the classroom, in social situations with peers, and in social situations outside of school. Additionally, it is important to consider whether the child experiences related distress and experiences the behavior as ego-dystonic. As suggested by this research, parental values, social standards and reactions, and a child's emotional experience represent different components that may not always be in harmony.

The current project was an initial exploration of the complex associations between parental cultural orientation, shyness, and anxiety in Hispanic children. We extended previous cross-national research by examining how the specific dimensions of parental acculturation, collectivism, and socialization goal of respect for elders were associated with child shyness within a sample of Hispanic American children. Subsequently, we examined whether the cultural dimensions of collectivism and parental socialization goals influenced the consistency of children's shyness across adult and peer contexts. Finally, we examined whether cultural factors moderate the association between shyness and anxiety in Hispanic children. This research represents an important initial step in that it extends this line of research to Hispanic families and aims to explicitly test associations between specific cultural factors hypothesized to be related to children's shyness. By employing a longitudinal design, future research will be better able to examine the predictive power of shy behavior on Hispanic children's internalizing symptoms. However, the greater challenge will be in understanding the

meaning of these constructs within a given cultural and social context. To begin to overcome these obstacles, future research should include additional informant reports as well as observational measures of shyness in order to obtain measures of children's shy-inhibited behavior that are independent of parental cultural lens, values, and preferences. In this manner, it may be possible to forge an understanding of the causal processes in the expression of culturally appropriate and inappropriate behavior, the meaning of behavior within a context, and the resulting impact of that behavior on children's social and emotional development.

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