Shyness and Adaptation Across Cultures

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Introduction

Developmental theorists and researchers have long believed that peer interactions constitute an important social context for children to learn various skills and appropriate behaviors that are necessary for achieving success and socioemotional adjustment (Hartup, 1992; Rubin, Bukowski, & Bowker, 2015). The activities during peer interactions provide opportunities for children to develop social-cognitive abilities, such as perspective-taking and organization of strategies to solve interpersonal disputes (e.g., Piaget, 1932). Peer interactions also help children understand social standards and expectations and display self-regulatory behaviors in social settings. Moreover, social relationships formed and maintained through peer interactions are conducive to the attainment of feelings of affiliation and belongingness, which may serve to reduce psychological distress, such as loneliness and depression (Rubin et al., 2015; Sullivan, 1953). Given this background, it is reasonable to argue that children who withdraw from peer interactions, due to social fear and anxiety, a lack of social interest, or other reasons, are likely to be at risk for developing social and psychological problems (Coplan & Weeks, 2010; Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009).

As a major type of social withdrawal, shyness in childhood and adolescence has received much attention from researchers in the past several decades (e.g., Asendorpf, 1993; Coplan, Prakash, O'neil, & Armer, 2004; Schmidt & Buss, 2010). Findings of studies in North American and West European societies have shown that shyness is associated with, and predictive of, low social status (Bohlin, Hagekull, & Andersson, 2005; Rydell, Bohlin, & Thorell, 2005), peer victimization (Buhs, Rudasill, Kalutskaya, & Griese, 2015; Dill, Vernberg, Fonagy, Twemlow, & Gamm, 2004), academic underachievement (Hughes & Coplan, 2010), and internalizing problems (Eggum-Wilkens, Valiente, Swanson, &

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L. A. Schmidt, K. L. Poole (eds.), *Adaptive Shyness*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38877-5_11

Lemery-Chalfant, 2014; Nelson et al., 2008; Sette, Zava, Baumgartner, Baiocco, & Coplan, 2017). However, cultural norms and values are likely to affect social perceptions and evaluations of shy behavior. As a result, culture may play a significant role in shaping the display and development of shyness and determine, in part, its relations with adjustment outcomes.

The focus on this chapter is on shyness and adaptation among children and adolescents in different cultures, especially Western and Eastern cultures. We first discuss some conceptual issues, such as those concerning the constructs of shyness and related behaviors. Then, we review research on social attitudes of parents and peers toward shyness in different societies, followed by a section on the role of culture in affecting the relations between shyness and adjustment. During the discussion, we pay particular attention to the implications of macro-level social changes and associated individual acculturation processes. The chapter concludes with some suggestions for future research.

Shyness and Related Constructs

Social withdrawal refers to the process in which individuals remove themselves from opportunities for social interactions and frequently display solitary behaviors in social contexts (Rubin et al., 2009). As a type of social withdrawal, shyness is concerned with wariness, unease, vigilance, and self-consciousness in contexts of social novelty or perceived social evaluation (Crozier, 1995). According to Asendorpf (1991), shyness represents a personality trait that derives from an internal conflict of approach and avoidance motivations in social interactions. Shy children often have the desire to interact with others and demonstrate interest in social activities. However, their approach motivation is hindered by a high level of fear and anxiety in the face of novel or challenging situations (Coplan & Armer, 2007).

Shyness is distinct from some other forms of social withdrawal, such as unsociability or social disinterest. Whereas shyness reflects a combination of conflictual social approach and social avoidance motivations, unsociability is driven by a low approach motivation to interact with others (Asendorpf, 1990; Coplan & Armer, 2007). Unlike shy children who display anxious and fearful feelings in challenging social situations, unsociable children often express a nonfearful preference for solitude (Coplan et al., 2013; Coplan, Ooi, & Baldwin, 2019; Goossens, 2013). The conceptual differentiation between shyness and other forms of social withdrawal, particularly unsociability, has important implications for cross-cultural research. In Western individualistic societies, unsociability or social disinterest may be considered an expression of personal choice, autonomy, or a self-oriented action, and therefore may be associated with less maladaptive outcomes than shyness (e.g., Larson, 1997; Leary, Herbst, & McCrary, 2003; Liu et al., 2015). In some group-oriented cultures such as the traditional Chinese culture, however, shyness appears to be relatively benign and acceptable, but unsociability is regarded as

anti-collective, selfish, and problematic and is thus related to heightened socioemotional difficulties (e.g., Chen, Wang, & Cao, 2011).

Compared with unsociability, behavioral inhibition seems to be more conceptually and empirically linked with shyness. Behavioral inhibition refers to a dispositional trait of temperamental reactivity to unfamiliar social and nonsocial situations in early childhood (Fox, Henderson, Marshall, Nichols, & Ghera, 2005; Kagan, 1998; Stevenson-Hinde, Shouldice, & Chicot, 2011). When presented with novel stimuli, infants who show high behavioral inhibition tend to be physiologically reactive and exhibit a high level of negative affect such as distress, fear, and crying (Fox, Henderson, Rubin, Calkins, & Schmidt, 2001; Garcia-Coll, Kagan, & Reznick, 1984). Inhibited toddlers are hesitant to approach a stranger, retreat from unfamiliar objects, and engage in little vocalization during free play in unfamiliar places. They are also likely to display reticent behaviors in peer groups (Coplan et al., 2004; Coplan, Rubin, Fox, Calkins, & Stewart, 1994). For example, inhibited toddlers tend to observe their peers' play activities without joining (i.e., onlooking behavior). From a developmental perspective, behavioral inhibition is considered an antecedent of children's anxiety-based shyness in reaction to novel objects or social circumstances (e.g., Asendorpf, 1991; Coplan & Armer, 2007; Rubin et al., 2009). Relative to behavioral inhibition, shyness may be more susceptible to cultural influence because the emergence of shyness is more closely related to the social interaction context (Chen, 2018).

Researchers have proposed other constructs focusing on relatively adaptive aspects of shyness, including positive shyness (Colonnesi, Bögels, de Vente, & Majdandžic, 2013; Colonnesi, Napoleone, & Bögels, 2014) and regulated shyness (Xu, Farver, Chang, Zhang, & Yu, 2007; Xu, Farver, Yu, & Zhang, 2009; Xu & Krieg, 2014). Positive shyness, suggested by Colonnesi et al. (2014), refers to the positive expression of shyness during infancy (i.e., coy smile) as a way to regulate emotions in anxiety-provoking situations. Positive shyness may serve an adaptive function in regulating fear and arousal, which in turn may enhance prosociality and trust (Colonnesi et al., 2013; Reddy, 2000, 2005; see also Chap. 3 this volume). Xu et al. (2007) introduced a concept of regulated shyness, which is characterized by nonassertive and unassuming shy behaviors (e.g., "someone who does not show off," "someone who behaves modestly") that are associated with self-control and social restraint. Regulated shyness is differentiated from anxious shy behaviors, in that children who exhibit regulated shyness do not avoid social contact (Xu & Farver, 2009; see also Chap. 12 this volume). Given the nonassertive nature of regulated shyness, which reflects a child's desire to fit in with the group (Leary & Buckley, 2001; Xu et al., 2007), regulated shyness is consistent with group-oriented values that are emphasized in traditional Chinese culture and is shown to be related to peer acceptance in Chinese children (Xu et al., 2007). Cross-cultural research on shyness-related constructs, including positive shyness and regulated shyness, is limited. It will be interesting to explore their meanings and functions in different cultures.

The Biology of Shyness

Children's shyness is associated with various biological processes. For example, biological studies in Western samples have revealed a link between heart period (the interval between heartbeats or one cardiac cycle) and shyness. Inhibited children exhibited shorter heart period (i.e., faster heart rate) in response to unfamiliarity than uninhibited children (Garcia-Coll et al., 1984; Henderson, Marshall, Fox, & Rubin, 2004). Although comprehensive research on biological correlates of shyness has been conducted with Western samples, little cross-cultural comparative studies on the biology of shyness have been conducted (Khan, Schmidt, & Chen, 2017). Xu et al. (2009) examined biological reactions of shy Chinese elementary school-age children and found that when exposed to an interaction with an unfamiliar adult, shy children displayed shorter heart periods (i.e., higher heart rates) than non-shy children. This exploratory study suggests that shyness involves a similar process of autonomic nervous system in both Western and Chinese societies.

Research conducted in Western societies has revealed that the serotonin transporter genetic polymorphisms are associated with shyness (e.g., Fox et al., 2005; Lesch et al., 1996). Despite mixed results (Munafo et al., 2003; Schmidt, Fox, Rubin, Hu, & Hamer, 2002), in general, individuals who carry short alleles of the 5HTT-linked polymorphism (5-HTTLPR) tend to exhibit more fearful and anxious reactivity in response to unfamiliarity than individuals who carry long alleles of 5-HTTLPR. However, a recent study showed that the long allele of the 5-HTTLPR gene was related to behavioral inhibition among Chinese children (Chen et al., 2014). In this study, children with the long allele of the 5-HTTLPR exhibited more inhibited behaviors in the unfamiliar situation than children with the short allele of the 5-HTTLPR. This pattern was different from most of the results in Western children. Several studies have shown differences in the relative frequencies of the 5-HTTLPR alleles between East Asian and Western individuals; higher proportions of Chinese and Japanese people carried the short allele compared to Western people (Kumakiri et al., 1999; Nakamura et al., 1997; Tsai, Hong, & Cheng, 2002). Chen and colleagues' (2014) study indicated not only the differences in relative frequencies of the 5-HTTLPR alleles but also different relations between the short allele of the 5-HTTLPR and behavioral inhibition. The results seem to suggest that cultural contexts may play a role in regulating the processes underlining the links between biological factors and behavioral inhibition. Further research is needed to clarify the issue.

Cultural Values and Meanings of Shyness

Researchers have explored the meaning of shyness in different cultures, mostly through the assessment of individual perceptions and beliefs using self-report methods (e.g., Rubin, Nelson, Hastings, & Asendorpf, 1999). Weisz, Suwanlert,

Chaiyasit, Weiss, and Jackson (1991) asked parents and teachers in Thailand and the United States to make judgments about children who displayed overcontrolled behaviors, including shyness and fear. The results showed that Thai parents and teachers rated behavioral problems less serious and less worrisome than their US counterparts. Weisz and colleagues argued that Thai adults may tolerate broad variations in child behaviors, which is related to the values of avoiding strong emotional reactions in Thai Buddhism.

A method that is more commonly used in the study of cultural meanings is examining individual responses to hypothetical vignettes describing shy behavior (e.g., Cheah & Rubin, 2004; Coplan, Girardi, Findlay, & Frohlick, 2007). In a study of cultural norms and social anxiety, Heinrichs et al. (2006), for example, presented to participants several vignettes involving socially withdrawn behavior and asked them to provide judgments about how appropriate the behavior was in their culture. The results showed that socially withdrawn behavior was more accepted in collectivistic societies (Japan, Korea, and Spain) than in individualistic societies (Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, and USA). A similar method was used in other cross-cultural studies (e.g., Bowker, Ojo, & Bowker, 2016; Cheah & Rubin, 2003) in which adults or youth were asked to respond to vignettes portraying a child being withdrawn among peers (e.g., standing alone and not playing at preschool). The results of these studies were often mixed in terms of cultural differences and similarities.

Based on Heinrichs et al.'s study (2006), Rapee et al. (2011) further explored cultural meanings of shyness in East Asian and Western cultures by asking youth to report their expected social impact of the behavior. Specifically, after the vignette was presented, the participants rated the extent to which they would expect the person in the vignette to be socially liked and to succeed in their careers (e.g., future relationships with colleagues and bosses). The study showed that Western youth viewed shy behavior as clearly less desirable than outgoing behavior. However, youths in East Asian countries, including China, Japan, and Korea, viewed them as less different, which suggested that youth in East Asia were more accepting of shy behavior than youth in the West.

Chen and colleagues (e.g., Chen, 2012, in press) argued that cultural meanings of shyness may be examined from a contextual-developmental perspective. According to this perspective, cultural influence on individual behaviors or behavioral characteristics is an interactive process that is mediated by mutual evaluations and responses in social activities. In such processes, culture provides guidance for interpreting and evaluating individual behaviors (Benedict, 1934; Chen & French, 2008). During social interactions, socialization agents, such as parents and peers, evaluate children's behaviors according to cultural expectations, norms, and values, and express acceptance, approval, or rejection toward children who display these behaviors. Adults' and peers' evaluations and responses in turn promote or suppress the development of behaviors. Children also play an active role in endorsing, transforming, and constructing cultural norms and values in their interaction with adults and peers. In the following sections, we focus on how shyness is evaluated and responded by parents and peers in different cultural contexts.

Parental Attitudes Toward Shyness

Parental beliefs and socialization practices are likely to reflect cultural influences on children's development and adjustment (e.g., Super & Harkness, 1986; Whiting & Edwards, 1988). Parents in different societies prescribe to different cultural norms and value systems. During child development, parents hold different socialization goals and express different culturally guided judgments and responses toward children's behaviors. In Western societies, parents' socialization goals focus on individual autonomy, competitiveness, and self-expression (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Marjoribanks, 1994). In contrast, many non-Western societies place a strong emphasis on group-oriented values. Achieving and maintaining group harmony is a primary concern in many Asian societies, where individuals are expected to restrain personal desires and control expression of emotions. Parents in these societies may display positive attitudes toward children's shy behavior (e.g., Chen, 2010).

Findings from research with parents and children in Western societies have consistently indicated that shyness is viewed as socially immature, incompetent, and maladaptive (e.g., Rubin, Burgess, & Coplan, 2002) and is related to parental disappointment, concern, embarrassment, and rejection (e.g., Kyrios & Prior, 1990; Tani, Ponti, & Smorti, 2014; van Zalk, van Zalk, & Kerr, 2011). Low parental approval and acceptance of children's shyness in Western societies are manifested in parents' use of high-power socialization strategies in response to shyness (e.g., Rubin et al., 1999). Parents of shy children are found to be overprotective, intrusive, and controlling of their children's behaviors, such as taking over and telling the child what to do (e.g., Hane, Cheah, Rubin, & Fox, 2008; Miller, Tserakhava, & Miller, 2011). In a longitudinal project with a Canadian sample, Hastings and Rubin (1999) examined toddlers' inhibition through observation and assessed mothers' reported socialization strategies in reaction to children's social withdrawal. The results indicated that toddlerhood behavioral inhibition predicted parent-reported directiveness and overcontrol in later years, suggesting that parents attempted to change toddlers' inhibition through redirection of their children's behavior in a power-assertive fashion.

Differences in attitudes toward shyness between Chinese parents and North American parents have been reported in a series of cross-cultural studies (e.g., Chen, Dong, & Zhou, 1997; Rubin et al., 2006). In traditional Chinese culture, children's vigilance and wariness are considered virtuous qualities that may indicate maturity and accomplishment (Chen, 2010). Children who are shy are likely perceived as well-behaved because behavioral restraint and submission that they display may contribute to group functioning (e.g., Ho, 1986). In an observational study using the Behavioral Inhibition Paradigm (Garcia-Coll et al., 1984), Chen et al. (1998) examined the relations between maternal attitudes and toddlers' behavioral inhibition. Chinese mothers and Canadian mothers completed a measure of child-rearing attitudes that assessed their acceptance, rejection, and punishment orientation. Toddlers were observed for their reluctance to approach a stranger and to explore new toys. The results showed that Canadian mothers expressed higher levels of rejection and punishment toward child inhibition, compared to Chinese mothers, who showed higher levels of acceptance of child inhibition.

Research with Latino parents suggested that children's shyness also tended to be related to positive parental attitudes. For example, Varela, Sanchez-Sosa, Biggs, and Luis (2009) found that in Latino families, children's shyness was positively associated with maternal warmth and negatively associated with paternal power assertion and hostile control. Other cross-cultural empirical findings showed that shyness, across different developmental periods, was perceived as less problematic in Asian societies, such as Korea and Thailand, than in North American societies (e.g., Kim, Rapee, Oh, & Moon, 2008; Weisz et al., 1991).

Peer Attitudes Toward Shyness

Peers are important socialization agents whose attitudes toward shyness may vary across cultures (Chen & Schmidt, 2015). In social interactions, peers may demonstrate acceptance or rejection in reaction to specific individual temperament and personality characteristics and behaviors (Chen, 2018). In Western societies, shy children tend to experience peer rejection and isolation (e.g., Rubin et al., 2009). As peers exclude them from social activities, shy children begin to actively withdraw from peer interactions and develop social anxiety and other internalizing problems (Burgess, Wojslawowicz, Rubin, Rose-Krasnor, & Booth-LaForce, 2006; Gazelle & Ladd, 2003; Harrist, Zaia, Bates, Dodge, & Pettit, 1997; Zakriski & Coie, 1996).

Relative to the negative attitudes expressed by peers in Western societies, peer attitudes toward shyness in Asian countries were found to be more positive (e.g., Chen, Rubin, & Li, 1995). For example, Chen, DeSouza, Chen, and Wang (2006) conducted a cross-cultural study of peer interactions among 4-year-olds in China and Canada, and found that social interactions initiated by shy children resulted in different peer reactions in different cultural environments. Specifically, when shy children in Canada initiated social interactions, their peers tended to express overt rejection, disagreement, and intentional ignoring of the initiation. However, in China, peers showed more positive responses and support, such as compliance and cooperation. As Chen et al. (2006) indicated, peers in Canada perceived passive and shy behavior as an indication of incompetence, whereas in China, peers perceived shyness as an appropriate indication of a desire for social interaction. Similar positive peer attitudes toward shyness have been reported in studies conducted in other Asian societies. For example, Rapee and colleagues (Heinrichs et al., 2006; Rapee et al., 2011) found that, compared to youth in Western countries, youth in East Asian countries were more approving of shy and unassertive behaviors.

The Display of Shyness Across Cultures

Cultural norms and values provide guidance for individuals to express certain temperamental characteristics (Chen, 2018). According to Rothbart and Bates (2006), individual experiences in socialization and social interaction may

reinforce or inhibit the display of certain characteristics. Cross-cultural studies have shown that children and adolescents in different societies differ in their display of shyness and related behaviors. For example, according to parental reports, East Asian children were rated as more shy and fearful in stressful settings and less likely to approach unfamiliar situations compared with their Western counterparts (Gartstein et al., 2006; Porter et al., 2005). Studies that examined peer-nominated shyness (e.g., Chen & Tse, 2008) showed that among Canadian-born children, Chinese Canadian children scored higher than European Canadian children on shyness-related traits.

Results of parental and peer reports were consistent with those from observational studies. Compared with European American children, Korean American children displayed more shy behavior and fewer self-expressive behaviors in preschool settings (e.g., Farver, Kim, & Lee, 1995). Asian and Western children also differed on reactivity in toddlerhood and the preschool years. For example, Rubin et al. (2006) observed Chinese, Korean, Australian, Canadian, and Italian toddlers in novel laboratory settings and found that Chinese and Korean toddlers exhibited more fearful and anxious reactions than Western toddlers. Specifically, Asian toddlers remained close to their mothers during free play sessions and were more reluctant to explore the novel environment. When a female stranger entered the room, Asian toddlers waited longer to approach the stranger and to touch the toys when they were invited to do so.

There are different views about shyness in Latino children. For example, Polo and López (2009) argued that cultural values such as social connectedness and group orientation are emphasized in Latino societies as in many East Asian societies, which may enhance children's self-consciousness, concerns with social evaluations, and sensitivity in social situations. On the other hand, some scholars (e.g., Schreier et al., 2010) argued that Latino societies promote values such as sociability, self-expression, and discouragement of criticism and rejection, which may help reduce children's reactivity in social settings. Existing results (Gudino & Lau, 2010; Polo & López, 2009; Varela et al., 2004) tend to support Polo and López (2009)'s argument, but more studies need to be conducted on this issue.

Shyness and Adaptive Development: The Role of Cultural Context

Cultural contexts may exert influence on the manifestation of temperamental traits as well as their functional meanings in development, which may be indicated by their relations with adjustment outcomes. In societies where assertiveness and self-expression are valued and encouraged, shy behavior is likely to contribute to the development of adjustment problems. However, in societies where individualistic values are not emphasized, shy behavior may be associated with more positive outcomes or less negative outcomes.

Relations Between Shyness and Adjustment

Cross-cultural variations in the relations between shyness and adjustment outcomes have been reported in the literature. In Western societies, shyness has been consistently found to be associated with difficulties in social relationships (e.g., Asendorpf, Denissen, & van Aken, 2008; Coplan et al., 2004; Rydell et al., 2005), learning problems (e.g., Crozier & Hostettler, 2003; Hughes & Coplan, 2010), negative self-perceptions of social competencies and general self-worth, and other internalizing problems (Boivin, Hymel, & Bukowski, 1995; Findlay, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009; Gazelle & Rudolph, 2004; Prior, Smart, Sanson, & Oberklaid, 2000). The associations are both concurrent and longitudinal, suggesting that shy behavior may lead to social and psychological problems in a short period and have enduring undesirable effects on adjustment in Western societies. Interestingly, in a Swedish sample, shyness has been linked with negative outcomes, but the associations were weaker, compared with the findings in the United States (Kerr, Lambert, & Bem, 1996). The difference may be due to the relatively egalitarian values in Sweden, which may make shy youth and non-shy youth less different in their life adjustment (Kerr et al., 1996).

On the other hand, studies conducted in China have provided evidence for adaptive significance of shyness. The results of these studies showed that shyness was positively associated with indexes of social, emotional, and school adjustment (e.g., Chen et al., 2011; Chen, Rubin, & Sun, 1992). Shy children in China not only gained peer approval, but also succeeded academically and were perceived as competent by teachers (Chen et al., 1995). In addition, shy children were more likely than non-shy children to acquire leadership status and the award of distinguished studentship. In terms of psychological adjustment, shy children rated themselves low on loneliness or depression. The positive relations between shyness and children's adjustment are also found in longitudinal studies, which showed that childhood shyness predicted social competence, academic achievement, and psychological well-being in adolescence (e.g., Chen, Rubin, Li, & Li, 1999). Taken together, these results suggest that whereas cultural disapproval of shyness may impede children's development of well-being, cultural endorsement of shyness may help shy children develop positive adjustment outcomes.

As we mentioned earlier, shyness is different from other aspects of social withdrawal, such as social solitude, unsociability, and social disinterest (e.g., "Kids who would rather be alone"; Coplan et al., 2004). According to Asendorpf (1990), unsociability is driven by a low approach motivation. Unlike shy children who may be accepted by others and adjust well, unsociable children, who are not motivated to engage in social interactions, are often regarded as anti-collective and experience adjustment problems in China. This argument has been supported by findings of some studies in Chinese samples (e.g., Liu et al., 2014). In addition, Xu and colleagues have investigated the functional meaning of regulated shyness in Chinese and other non-Western societies. The results suggested that regulated shyness was associated with more positive outcomes in a sample of Chinese children (Xu et al., 2007) and Turkish

children (Özdemir, Cheah, & Coplan, 2015). These results may be attributed to the cultural endorsement of unassuming behaviors that are thought to promote social harmony because unassertiveness is perceived to demonstrate a desire to fit in with the larger group. What is unclear is how regulated shyness is associated with adjustment in Western societies. Researchers should study relations between regulated shyness and adjustment outcomes in Western children and adolescents to better understand its adaptive meaning across cultures.

Social Change, Acculturation, and Shyness

According to the socioecological perspectives (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Greenfield, 2009; Kağıtçıbaşı, 2012), macro-level changing contexts are likely to affect the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of children and parents. As many traditional agricultural societies become industrialized and urbanized, the requirements of competitiveness and initiative-taking in commercial and other social activities may result in a greater endorsement of individual independence and autonomy. Accordingly, the adaptive value of shy behavior, which impedes individual exploration and self-expression in challenging settings, is likely to be undermined by the social change.

The impact of social change on children's shyness has been demonstrated by a series of studies that Chen and colleagues have conducted in China over the past decade (e.g., Chen, Cen, Li, & He, 2005; Liu et al., 2015). China has carried out a full-scale reform toward a market economy, particularly in urban regions, since the 1980s, which has resulted in an increase in individual and family income, privatization of industries, and rapid rise in competition (e.g., Zhang, 2000). Along with the social and economic changes that took place in the past few decades, Western individualistic values and ideologies, such as individual freedom and autonomy, have been introduced into the country (e.g., Kulich & Zhang, 2010). In contemporary China, the socialization goals of many parents and schools have expanded to cultivate children's social and behavioral qualities that are required for adaptation in the competitive society (e.g., Way et al., 2013). Children are now encouraged to express personal opinions and demonstrate self-assertiveness, which are qualities that have been neglected in traditional Chinese culture (Chen, Bian, Xin, Wang, & Silbereisen, 2010; Chen & Li, 2012).

Social change in China has been found to have an effect on the ways in which shyness contributes to children's adaptive and maladaptive development. Chen et al. (2005) examined the relations between shyness and adjustment in different phases of the social change in China. Although shyness was positively associated with social competence, leadership, and academic achievement in the 1990 cohort, the relations were generally nonsignificant or mixed in 1998. Furthermore, by 2002, as China transitioned rapidly into a market economy, shyness was positively associated with various problems in social and psychological domains; shy children were perceived as incompetent by teachers and peers, displayed school problems, and

reported high levels of depression. Differences in the relations between shyness and adjustment in the three cohorts in China suggest that, when shyness becomes incompatible with the demand of assertiveness in the society, shy children may experience difficulties in social and psychological adjustment.

The impact of macro-level contexts on shyness also has been demonstrated in urban-rural differences in China. Chen, Wang, and Wang (2009) reported that whereas shyness was associated with social and school problems and depression in urban children, it was associated with leadership, teacher-rated competence, and academic achievement in rural migrant children. Ding, Chen, Fu, Li, and Liu (2020) recently found that shyness was associated with fewer adjustment probems in rural migrant children than in urban children. It will be interesting to examine relations between shyness and adjustment in rural Chinese children as rural regions of China become urbanized.

Similar to the experience of rural-to-urban migrant children in China, children from immigrant families in North America display lower levels of shyness as a result of acculturation. For example, Chen and Tse (2010) found that, among Chinese children who immigrated to Canada, proficiency in English and length of residence in Canada were negatively related to peer-nominated shyness, suggesting that Chinese children who were more socialized with Western cultural values displayed less shy behavior. In a longitudinal study, Huntsinger and Jose (2006) found that second-generation Chinese American adolescents reported higher levels of shyness than their European American counterparts. However, in a follow-up study that was conducted 5 years later, differences in shyness between the two groups largely disappeared due to the acculturation experience of Chinese American youth. Similar results have been reported in immigrant Mexican American youth and Hispanic/Latin American children (e.g., Gudino & Lau, 2010; Polo & López, 2009), indicating that socialization and acculturative experiences in the North American context may contribute to decline in shyness. An important issue that remains to be examined is how acculturation is involved in shaping the adaptive meaning of shyness among immigrant children. Research on the adjustment of shy immigrant children who accept new cultural values and who maintain traditional values will provide valuable information about processes of cultural influence on individual development.

Issues and Future Directions

From the evolutionary perspective, shyness in unfamiliar or challenging settings is likely to serve adaptive function in protecting individuals, especially children, from potential risks when interacting with others may pose threats or harms. Anxious reactions in these settings allow individuals to be vigilant to and avoid the risks and, at the same time, maintain social connections. In many contemporary Western societies, however, shyness is viewed as indicating social incompetence and immaturity because it impedes the exploration, initiative-taking, and self-expression, which are

required to achieve success in competitive commercial and industrialized social environments. As a result, the adaptive value of shyness is substantially reduced or diminished, and the display of shy behavior is associated with social disapproval, rejection, and lack of opportunities to learn various skills, which in turn contribute to social and academic difficulties and psychological problems (Rubin et al., 2015).

Rapid social changes toward industrialization and modernization are occurring in many traditionally agricultural societies in the world (Greenfield, 2009; Kağıtçıbaşı, 2012). How the social changes impact the relation between shyness and adaptation is an important and interesting question for developmental researchers. Greenfield (2009) argues that a consequence of the social changes in these countries is the cultural shift from emphasis on collectivistic values to emphasis on individualistic values in socialization, which facilitates the development of independent behaviors in children. Accordingly, shy behavior becomes increasingly maladaptive, leading to pervasive social and psychological problems. The research findings from some developing countries and regions (e.g., Chen et al., 2005; Kağıtçıbaşı & Ataca, 2005) appear to support this argument. However, Chen (2012, 2015) and Tamis-LeMonda et al. (2008) argue that the ongoing social changes in both developing and developed countries are likely to bring about coexistence and integration of mixed, even conflictual, cultural values. As a result, the exposure to, and experience of, diverse values are an important part of human development. How shy children adapt and develop in this context should be investigated systematically.

According to the contextual-developmental perspective (Chen, 2012), social interaction in group and larger settings is a main mechanism through which culture and its change influence individual development. Culturally directed social evaluations and responses in interaction define adaptive and maladaptive meanings of behaviors and, at the same time, serve to regulate their development. During the process, children play an active role through their reactions to the social influences and through participating in the construction of norms for group interaction. There is little research on the role of social interaction in "mediating" the link between culture and shyness. It will be interesting to investigate social interaction experiences of shy children and cultural involvement in shaping these experiences.

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