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Cultural Values and Internalizing Symptoms among Latinx Youth: The Role of Gender

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**Cultural Values and Internalizing Symptoms among
Latinx Youth: The Role of Gender**

A Thesis

Presented in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

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Bibliography

The author was born in Mexico City, Mexico on December 12, 1997. She graduated cum laude from the University of California, Irvine in 2020 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Social Behavior.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	7
Introduction.....	8
Internalizing Symptoms among Latinx Youth.....	8
Theoretical Framework.....	9
Latinx Family Cultural Values	10
Attitudinal Familism and Internalizing Symptoms.....	13
Affiliative Obedience and Internalizing Symptoms.....	13
Interplay of Gender on Cultural Values and Internalizing Symptoms.....	14
Interactive Effects of Multiple Cultural Values.....	16
Rationale.....	18
Aims and Hypotheses.....	19
Method.....	22
Participants.....	22
Measures.....	23
Procedure.....	25
Results.....	26
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations.....	26
Endorsement Differences in Family Cultural Values between Girls and Boys.....	27
Supportive Familism as a Moderator.....	28
Gender as a Moderating Moderator.....	31
Gender and Family Cultural Variables.....	35

Discussion.....36

Limitations and Future Directions.....41

References.....45

Footnotes.....55

Abstract

Latinx youth are at a disproportionate risk for developing internalizing symptoms. The Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies suggests that cultural values can serve as protective factors against the development of mental health problems. Much less is known about the impact of multiple cultural values and their combined effects on internalizing symptoms in Latinx youth. Moreover, since gender influences socialization and cultural value endorsement, additional research is needed to examine how cultural values may differentially protect boys' and girls' mental health. This study addresses these gaps by examining a) supportive familism's moderational role in the relation between affiliative obedience and youth depression and anxiety; and b) gender as a moderator of these moderational effects. The sample includes 1,020 Latinx students ($M_{\text{age}} = 11.5$; $SD = 1.0$) recruited from ten public schools in Chicago. Results showed that supportive familism significantly moderated the relation between affiliative obedience and depression [$b = .04$ 95% C.I. (.01, .07), $p = .02$]. Moreover, significant moderated moderation results were found, such that the lowest depression and anxiety levels were found among girls (but not boys) who had both high affiliative obedience and supportive familism. Results highlight the importance of considering both cultural values and gender when supporting Latinx youth and their families.

Keywords: Latinx youth, gender, internalizing symptoms, familism, affiliative obedience

Cultural Values and Internalizing Symptoms among Latinx youth: The Role of Gender¹

The Latinx² population is the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the United States. According to the most recent census data, Latinxs comprise around 19% (approximately 62 million) of the U.S. population. The percentage of Latinx children (ages 18 and under) within the U.S. has grown steadily, totaling 18.6 million in 2019, and making up more than one quarter (26%) of the U.S. child population (Chen & Guzman, 2021). The U.S. census views Latinx origin as the heritage, nationality, and lineage of country of birth of a person or person's parents or ancestors before arriving in the United States. It is important to note that people who identify as Latinx can be of any race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

Internalizing Symptoms among Latinx Youth

Internalizing symptoms, including depression and anxiety, are prevalent among adolescents and they often co-occur. However, they are two separate forms of distress or conditions that can have unique risk or protective factors (Pollack, 2005). Research has documented that, among U.S. adolescents, the rate of depressive disorders almost doubles between the ages of 13 (8.4%) and 18 (15.4%; Merikangas et al., 2010). Among children and adolescents, research consistently shows that Latinx youth report higher rates of depression compared to youth from other ethnic groups (Polo et al., 2023). The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health study (also known as Add Health Study), one of the largest school-based epidemiological studies in the U.S., found that Latinx youth report the highest symptoms of depression compared to their Asian American, African American, and European American peers (Anderson & Mayes, 2010). Survey data using the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) found depression prevalence rates that were twice as high among Latinx youth

compared to European American youth (Mikolajczyk et al., 2007). Additionally, Latinx girls consistently endorse more depressive symptoms compared to Latinx boys and girls from other ethnic groups (McLaughlin et al., 2007; Wagstaff & Polo, 2012).

Although fewer studies have compared ethnic differences in anxiety, the emerging pattern parallels the research on depressive symptoms. For instance, referred Latinx youth across 59 public schools in Chicago reported significantly higher social anxiety and higher generalized anxiety symptoms than their non-Latinx peers both prior and during the Covid-19 pandemic (Polo et al., 2023). Latinx youth tend to report more somatic symptoms as well as higher rates of symptoms relating to separation anxiety disorder than their European American peers (McLaughlin et al., 2007). Varela and colleagues (2004) also found that Latinx youth reported more physical symptoms of anxiety and higher symptoms of worry than their European American peers when administering the Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale (RCMAS). Other research found that Latinx boys between the ages of 12-19 reported higher anxiety symptoms on the 10-item version of the Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children (MASC) compared to their Latinx girl peers (Potochnick & Perreira, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

The current study is situated within the Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies (Coll et al., 1996). The Integrative model focuses on ethnic minority youth development and was developed specifically to address gaps in existing theoretical frameworks that did not center cultural and contextual factors. The Integrative model places social stratification constructs such as race, social class, ethnicity, and gender at the core when discussing minority youth development (Coll et al., 1996). Additionally, systemic barriers

connected to race and ethnicity such as social class, discrimination, and the consequences of hostile U.S. immigration policies thought to be contributing factors of internalizing symptoms among Latinx youth and are also seen as fundamental to minority youth development within the Integrative model. Montoro and Ceballo (2021) found that stressors such as language conflicts, racial discrimination, and a greater need for goods and services (e.g., furniture, transportation, clothing, food) were associated with higher anxiety and depression among a sample of 224 low income Latinx 9th graders. Using Coll's Integrative model to guide their research, Chen and colleagues (2016) found that, among Latinx college students, increased familism moderated the relation between acculturative stress and depressive symptoms. This present study builds on existing research by examining cultural protective factors for anxiety and depression. Aligned with the Integrative model, this study includes Latinx cultural values to help understand their well-being. Latinx youth with high family cultural values may be better protected against negative emotional developmental trajectories such as internalizing symptoms of anxiety and depression. Additionally, gender may interact with the familial, cultural, and individual development of these youth (Chen et al., 2016).

Latinx Family Cultural Values

Cultural values are core principles and beliefs that exist among communities and can influence an individual's developmental trajectory and maladjustment (Martinez et al., 2012; Martinez & Polo, 2018). Although within group heterogeneity exists, Latinx households have been described as inculcating family cultural values that can differ from those of mainstream U.S. culture (Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2012). Included among the family cultural values that have been documented as central to Latinx communities are familism and affiliative obedience or *respeto* (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004).

The concept of familism is often defined as a cultural value that emphasizes the importance of family over the individual in terms of support, obligation, behaviors, and attitudes (Stein et al., 2014). Familism is a multi-faceted concept, consisting of three different levels: structural familism, behavioral familism, and attitudinal familism which can all be used to assess levels of familism. Attitudinal familism, however, is the level of familism that is focused on the most in research due to its complexity and multiple facets (Kuhlberg et al., 2010). Attitudinal familism measures an individual's thoughts and feelings regarding the value they place on the three different aspects of familism: obligatory familism, referent familism and supportive familism (Piña-Watson et al., 2013). Obligatory familism is defined as the extent to which an individual believes the family unit has an obligation to provide support for each other (Valdivieso-Mora et al., 2016). Referent familism is defined as the extent to which an individual's behavior reflect that of their family's values and expectations. Due to its limited research, the current study focuses on supportive familism, which is the degree to which an individual feels supported by their family economically, socially, or emotionally (Stein et al., 2020).

Affiliative obedience, first termed by Mexican researcher Diaz-Guerrero, is defined as the level of endorsement someone places on the values of respect and deference towards adults, and particularly towards parents (Polo & Lopez, 2009). Affiliative obedience has also been closely related to *respeto* (respect) in other research (Stein & Polo, 2013). Endorsement of this cultural value is seen prominently throughout Latinx culture and lays out the expectations among Latinx interpersonal relationships. Research has found that Latinx parents emphasize the importance of their children demonstrating *respeto* to elders and view the endorsement of this cultural value as important to successful parenting (Zucker & Howes, 2009). Affiliative

obedience among Latinx youth can aid in the development of strong and close ties among parent-child dyads and other extended family members and is situated around the importance of collectivism and the needs of others instead of focusing primarily on individual needs (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2007).

Originally studied among youth in Mexico, cross-national studies throughout the years have found that affiliative obedience is prominent among Latinx youth growing up in the United States. During a research study conducted by Peck and Diaz-Guerrero (1967), both Mexican students from Mexico City and Austin, Texas were administered a survey measuring different meanings of what they believed constituted the word respect. Both groups ranked similar among “culture-typed values” that defined respect as “To feel it is your duty to obey someone” (Peck & Diaz Guerrero, 1967). In a study conducted by Stein & Polo (2013) using 159 Mexican American families, results showed that both foreign- and U.S.- born youth and their parents endorse high levels of affiliative obedience. However, foreign-born youth and their parents report higher levels of affiliative obedience than U.S.-born youth and their parents. These results suggest that even though Latinx youth grow up in the U.S., values prominent to Latinx culture are still being endorsed by parents and play a role among Latinx youth development.

Although Latinx family cultural values may overlap, supportive familism, and affiliative obedience highlight unique aspects of Latinx culture and the relation between these two constructs has not been fully investigated (Cupito et al., 2015). Martinez and colleagues (2012) found that even though supportive familism and affiliative obedience were moderately and positively correlated ($r = .40$), SEM analyses showed a poor model fit with their proposed Latinx family orientation latent construct of supportive familism, family obligation and affiliative obedience. When supportive familism was trimmed from the model, results showed a good

model fit indicating that even though supportive familism and affiliative obedience are related, they operate as different cultural variables.

Attitudinal Familism and Internalizing Symptoms. An emerging body of literature has shown that familism or *familismo* has been found to serve as a protective factor against the development of certain mental health outcomes (Kuhlberg et al., 2010; Montoro & Ceballo, 2021; Nicasio et al., 2018). In a review of 39 studies, Valdivieso-Mora and colleagues (2016) found small but significant effects of familism on depression and other internalizing symptoms among Latinx youth and adults.

Research on supportive familism has shown that high levels of support are linked to serve as a protective factor against crises, psychological distress and may be linked to attachment (Stein et al., 2014). Latinx youth who report high levels of supportive familism also report lower levels of negative outcomes such as depressive symptoms (Arizaga, Polo, & Martinez-Torteya, 2020; McHale et al., 2009; Stein et al., 2015). In a longitudinal study using 492 Mexican-origin adolescents between the ages of 12 and 22, Zeiders and colleagues (2013) found that youth who consistently reported high levels of supportive familism also reported lower depressive symptoms. Although less researched on, supportive familism has also shown to be protective against the presence of anxiety symptoms. Aceves and colleagues (2019) found that youth with higher levels of supportive familism had lower reporting's of anxious feelings among a sample of 64 Latinx adolescents. Martinez and colleagues (2012) also found that higher familism was associated with lower physical symptoms and social anxiety, but higher harm avoidance.

Affiliative Obedience and Internalizing Symptoms. Fewer studies have been conducted on affiliative obedience and its role on Latinx youth mental health. Research conducted by Polo & Lopez (2009) showed that higher affiliative obedience was associated with

lower depression symptoms in a group of 161 Latinx youth. In a study conducted by Cupito and colleagues (2015), results showed that higher levels of affiliative obedience were significantly correlated with fewer depressive symptoms, but only among girls only. Research has also found that lower levels of endorsed affiliative obedience compared to their parents put older youth at risk for depression (Stein & Polo, 2013).

Research that focuses on the effects of affiliative obedience on anxiety is mixed. In the same study conducted by Polo & Lopez (2009), results showed that affiliative obedience was not significantly related to social anxiety symptoms. Martinez and colleagues (2012) found that Latinx early adolescents who endorsed higher affiliative obedience also presented with higher harm avoidance symptoms, but not with higher physical symptoms or higher social anxiety symptoms. More research is needed to clarify whether affiliative obedience can play a protective role on anxiety symptoms among Latinx youth.

Interplay of Gender on Cultural Values and Internalizing Symptoms

Even though the importance of family cultural values is instilled in both Latinx boys and girls from a young age, traditional gender role attitudes can shape the extent to which girls and boys may endorse values such as supportive familism and affiliative obedience (Updegraff et al., 2009). Latinx parents may socialize boys and girls differently. Family obligations for girls can emphasize the caregiver role: help the mother cook, clean, and take care of their siblings while remaining submissive. For boys on the other hand, family obligations may place an emphasis on upholding family honor and providing for the family while remaining dominant, independent, and “manly/*macho*” (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2007).

During two retrospective studies from Raffaelli and Ontai (2004), Latinx males and females reported gender socialization differences related to freedom and access to privileges

such as after-school activities, curfews, and when they were allowed to obtain driver's licenses. Overall, females had less freedom and privileges than males, often being expected to stay at home and help around the house instead. Guilamo-Ramos and colleagues (2009) conducted focus groups with 82 Latinx families and found that most mothers reported differential parenting practices as a function of gender between their adolescent children, raising their boys with more freedom than their girls. These socialization patterns may reflect parenting roles that are more protective of daughters and parental concerns related to the potentially unique risks for young adolescent girls (e.g., unwanted sexual involvement or pregnancy; Updegraff et al., 2009).

These socialization differences may lead to boys and girls adopting cultural values in differing degrees. When studying attitudinal familism, research has shown that females demonstrate higher levels of this cultural value compared to males (Cheng et al. 2016; Lac et al. 2011; Lorenzo-Blanco 2012). However, Aceves and colleagues (2019), found that even though Latinx girls reported higher levels of familism, gender did not significantly moderate the relation between familism and levels of anxious feelings in Latinx youth. Additionally, research on supportive familism has been mixed. Zeiders and colleagues (2013) found that Latinx girls report higher levels of supportive familism compared to Latinx boys. Other research has found that Latinx girls report significantly lower supportive familism scores compared to boys (Arizaga, Polo & Martinez-Torteya, 2020). When looking at affiliative obedience, some research has shown that Latinx boys and girls tend to report the same levels of this cultural value (Stein & Polo, 2013) while others show that Latinx girls tend to report higher levels of affiliative obedience compared to Latinx boys (Cupito et al., 2015). Lorenzo and colleagues (2012) measured *respeto*, which is closely related to affiliative obedience and found that, among a group of 1,992 Latinx students, girls scored higher on *respeto* than boys.

Even though research has found gender differences among the endorsement of Latinx cultural values, research has not systematically looked at gender as a moderator when studying the association between Latinx cultural values and internalizing symptoms. Coding was conducted on the 39 studies that were listed in the systematic review on the relation between familism and mental health outcomes in Latinx populations conducted by Valdivieso-Mora and colleagues (2016) and only two out of the 39 studies used gender as a moderator (Cupito et al., 2015; Lac et al., 2011). Cupito and colleagues (2015) found that gender significantly moderated the relation between affiliative obedience and depression, revealing that higher levels of affiliative obedience are associated with lower levels of depression for Latinx girls only. On the other hand, the inclusion of the gender interaction term was not significant for familism and depressive symptoms. Lac and colleagues (2011) used gender as a moderator to predict whether parental communication and familism predicted marijuana use differently between boys and girls. Results showed that higher levels of parent-child communication predicted less marijuana use among boys only whereas girls' use was relatively low regardless of parent-child communication levels. No relation was found between familism and marijuana use nor did gender moderate this hypothesized relation.

Interactive Effects of Multiple Cultural Values

Research has been able to establish that there are a number of different cultural values that relate to internalizing symptoms among Latinx youth. Specifically, cultural values such as familism, affiliative obedience, and family obligation are all independently associated with lower depression and anxiety symptoms in Latinx youth and may serve a protective role (Nicasio et al. 2018; Polo & Lopez 2009; Stein et al., 2014). However, studies have yet to focus on studying the possible interactive effects of these cultural values. In the same systematic review of the relation

between familism and mental health outcomes in Latinx populations conducted by Valdivieso-Mora and colleagues (2016), coding revealed that 11 out of the 39 studies measured multiple cultural variables. All of these studies included the Mexican American Cultural Values Scale (MASC) which is comprised of 6 different subscales, each tapping into different cultural values. However, none explored the interactive effects of combining two or more cultural values on Latinx youth mental health outcomes.

Studies in this area instead examine a singular cultural value's relation to youth mental health. For example, whether familism or family obligation are associated with internalizing symptoms among Latinx youth (Aceves et al., 2020; Ayon et al., 2010; Fuligni et al., 1999; German et al., 2008; Katiria Perez & Cruess 2011). The few studies that have included multiple cultural values have evaluated how each of them separately relate to Latinx youth maladjustment. For instance, Cupito and colleagues (2015) found that higher levels of familism were related to lower symptoms of depression but that affiliative obedience and filial obligations were not related to depressive symptoms among boys. Martinez and colleagues (2012) included three cultural values to evaluate their relation to youth anxiety. However, they created a latent construct to extract the commonalities between these variables. Other research studies have analyzed results using composite measures that sum across several cultural values. Gomez and Gudiño (2022), used the MASC on a sample of 161 Latinx youth and did not find a significant relation between cultural values, anxiety, and depression. Such measurement ambiguity raises concerns due to cultural values playing different roles in mental health and should be noted and improved upon in future research (Valdivieso-Mora et al., 2016).

Additionally, methodological approaches have limited the utility of research studies connecting cultural values to youth mental health. Some studies measure vague constructs in

place of cultural values such as acculturation levels as they relate to mental health and have found that adolescents who are highly involved in Latinx culture are at particular risk for internalizing problems (Smokowski & Bacallao, 2007) but do not elaborate on what aspects of Latinx culture these youth are endorsing. Research should investigate the endorsement of multiple cultural values and the combined effects of these values on Latinx youth mental health (Valdivieso-Mora et al., 2016).

Research is needed to examine whether Latinx youth who endorse high levels of multiple cultural values fare off better in terms of internalizing distress and other forms of maladjustment than those with low levels. Similarly, whether those Latinx youth at highest risk of mental health problems are those who report the lowest levels of endorsement of multiple cultural values. Alternatively, it is possible that certain cultural values are protective, but only in the presence of high levels of other cultural values. To date, supportive familism and affiliative obedience have yet to be analyzed together despite literature discussing how youth can be influenced by different levels of multiple cultural values and that these interactions can affect their mental health development differently (Cupito et al., 2015). It is important to study how the presence of these prominent cultural values can influence the effect of each other and if the interplay of such cultural values can combine and be associated with lower internalizing symptoms in Latinx youth. Such research would help create prevention and intervention strategies that better align with and represent the various cultural values Latinx youth face in real life.

Rationale

In summary, family cultural values and their associations with youth mental health have been well documented within Latinx youth. Familism generally has been associated with the presence of lower internalizing symptoms in Latinx youth (Kuhlberg et al. 2010; Montoro &

Ceballo 2021; Nicasio et al. 2018). Literature on affiliative obedience and its association with the presence of lower internalizing symptoms is limited but some research has found that higher levels of affiliative obedience also serve as a protective factor against internalizing symptoms (Cupito et al., 2015; Polo & Lopez, 2009). To date, there have been no studies that have examined the interaction of supportive familism and affiliative obedience in relation to internalizing symptoms among Latinx youth. Studying such interaction is important to better understand whether these values might, in combination, be particularly adaptive and beneficial to the mental health of Latinx youth.

The limited number of studies discussed have focused on studying how gender can influence the relations these protective factors have on the mental health of Latinx youth. Such research suggests that girls and boys experience different levels of familism, with girls reporting higher levels of familism compared to their male peers (Cheng et al. 2016; Lac et al. 2011; Lorenzo-Blanco 2012). In contrast, two different studies have found that, when studying affiliative obedience, girls and boys report similar levels of this family cultural value (Cupito et al., 2015; Stein & Polo 2013). However, affiliative obedience was associated with fewer depression symptoms among girls only (Cupito et al. 2015). This research points towards the importance of taking gender into consideration when studying the influence cultural values can have on Latinx youth mental health. By not studying how gender can affect the relation between cultural values and mental youth, clinicians run the risk of applying intervention strategies that are not generalizable to both Latinx boys and girls.

Aims and Hypotheses

To address these gaps, the current study will be the first to explore the interplay between supportive familism and affiliative obedience in relation to the presence of internalizing

symptoms among a sample of Latinx youth. Through regression analyses, it will be explored whether supportive familism moderates the relation between affiliative obedience and the presence of depression and anxiety symptoms. Fewer studies have connected affiliative obedience to Latinx youth internalizing problems and the few that have inconsistently find that this cultural value is protective. Therefore, identifying potential moderators, including supportive familism may be promising. Moreover, this study will examine gender differences across both supportive familism and affiliative obedience, along with gender's potential role in shaping the combined effects of these family cultural values on Latinx youth mental health. Due to the differences between levels of cultural values in girls and boys, the study predicts that the moderated relation between affiliative obedience and supportive familism will look different in Latinx girls and boys but will not hypothesize a certain direction. Since research has found that the associations between Latinx cultural values have been different for depression and anxiety, aims and analyses are separately conducted for these two forms of internalizing distress.

Aim 1. Examine whether there are gender differences in the endorsement of family cultural variables of supportive familism and affiliative obedience.

Hypothesis 1: Based on previous literature, it is expected that there will be no gender differences in affiliative obedience endorsement and significant differences in supportive familism endorsement such that girls will report higher levels of supportive familism than boys.

Aim 2. Examine whether supportive familism moderates the relation between affiliative obedience and internalizing symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Hypothesis 2a: It is expected that higher affiliative obedience will be associated with lower depression, and that this relation will be stronger among Latinx youth reporting higher levels of supportive familism.

Hypothesis 2b: It is expected that higher affiliative obedience will be associated with lower anxiety, and that this relation will be stronger among Latinx youth reporting higher levels of supportive familism.

Aim 3. To explore whether gender moderates the moderational relation supportive familism has between affiliative obedience and internalizing symptoms (Figure 1).

Model 3a: Explore gender as a moderator of the moderational effect of supportive familism on affiliative obedience and symptoms of depression between Latinx boys and girls.

Model 3b: Explore gender as a moderator of the moderational effect of supportive familism on affiliative obedience and symptoms of anxiety between Latinx boys and girls.

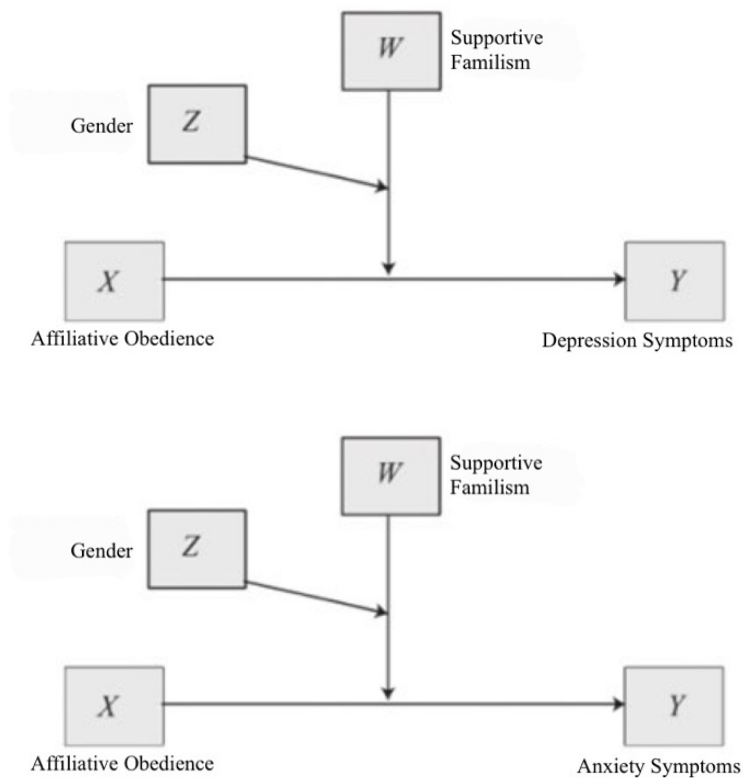


Figure 1

Gender Moderating the Moderational Relation that Supportive Familism has between Affiliative Obedience and a) Depression Symptoms; b) Anxiety Symptoms

Method

Participants

Participants for this study consisted of 1,055 self-reported Latinx youth. The data were examined for missing data across all of the study measures. The percentage of observations missing per measure are seen in Table 1. No missing data were found on any items across all measures for 1,020/1,055 participants (96.7% of the sample). The remaining 35 participants were excluded from the analyses since they had at least one measure in which over 50% of observations were missing. The final sample consisted of 1,020 Latinx youth ages 9-15 ($M_{age} = 11.5$; $SD = 1.0$; 54.0% female; 46.0% male) recruited from ten Chicago Public Schools (CPS) between the grades of 5th ($n = 209$), 6th ($n = 415$) and 7th ($n = 396$). The majority of students identified as Latinx only ($n = 871$; 85.4%), while some identified as Latinx mixed with African American ($n = 55$; 5.4%), Latinx mixed with European American ($n = 71$; 7.0%), and Latinx mixed with Asian American ($n = 2$; 0.2%). Latinx students who were mixed with 3 or more ethnicities (e.g., Latinx, African American and European American) were also included in the sample ($n = 21$; 2.1%). Nativity backgrounds for this sample (available for 1,017/1,020 students) consisted of largely second-generation students (U.S.-born with a foreign-born parent(s); $n = 729$; 71.5%) and third generation students (U.S.-born with U.S.-born parents and foreign-born grandparent(s); $n = 135$; 13.2%). First generation students (foreign-born with foreign-born parents; $n = 74$; 7.3%) and students with non-immigrant backgrounds (U.S.-born with U.S.-born parents and grandparents; $n = 79$; 7.7%) made up the rest sample. When asked about their Latinx heritage (available for 1,017/1,020 students), most students self-identified as Mexican American ($n = 624$; 61.2%). Other students were Puerto Rican ($n = 145$; 14.2%), Central or South American ($n = 78$; 7.6%), Cuban American ($n = 4$; 0.4%), other Latinx nationality ($n = 4$; 0.4%), and mixed Latinx descent ($n = 162$; 15.9%).

Table 1*Missing Observations by Scale, N = 1,055*

Scale	Expected observations	Missing observations	% of missing data	Participants with $\geq 50\%$ missing
Supportive Familism (7 items)	7,385	147	2.0%	25
Affiliative Obedience (10 items)	10,550	218	2.0%	29
Affective Problems (13 items)	13,715	297	2.1%	21
Anxiety Problems (6 items)	6,330	134	2.1%	21
Total (across all measures)	40,090	811	2.0%	35

Measures

Depressive symptoms. Internalizing symptoms of depression were measured through the Affective Problems DSM-oriented subscale included in the Youth Self-Report (YSR; Achenbach and Rescorla 2001). This measure is designed to assess behavioral and emotional problems present within the past 6 months among youth between the ages of 11-18. The Affective Problems DSM-oriented subscale is comprised of 13 items, such as “*There is very little that I enjoy,*” rated by students using a 3-point scale: 0 (*not true*), 1 (*somewhat true*) and 2 (*very true*). Depression scores were calculated by averaging across the 13 items of the Affective problems DSM oriented subscale. For the purpose of this study, the raw scores will be used in lieu of the t-scores for both types of internalizing symptoms since the raw scores are not adjusted for gender norms. The measure demonstrated acceptable ($\alpha = .79$) internal consistency within this sample,

which was almost parallel to the internal consistency on the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) manual ($\alpha = .80$; Achenbach and Rescorla 2001).

Anxiety symptoms. Internalizing symptoms of anxiety were measured with the Anxiety Problems DSM-oriented subscale included in the Youth Self-Report (YSR; Achenbach and Rescorla 2001). This subscale is comprised of six items that tap into anxiety problems through statements such as “*I am nervous or tense*”, which are rated by students using a 3-point scale: 0 (*not true*), 1 (*somewhat true*) and 2 (*very true*). Internalizing symptoms of anxiety will also be calculated by averaging across the 6 items of the Anxiety problems DSM oriented subscale. The measure demonstrated acceptable ($\alpha = .65$) internal consistency within this sample, similar to the internal consistency reported on the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) manual ($\alpha = .68$; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001).

Supportive Familism. This cultural value was measured using the Familism Scale (Gil, Wagner & Vega, 2000). Participants responded to a set of statements that assessed levels related to the supportive domain of attitudinal familism: respect, support, and cohesion. This measure consists of seven items and asks participants to rate items such as “We share similar values and beliefs as a family” using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Agree*) to 5 (*Strongly Disagree*). Items were reverse scored so that higher scores on this measure indicate higher levels of supportive familism. This measure demonstrated good ($\alpha = .89$) internal consistency within this sample which was similar to the internal consistency found among other Latinx samples ($\alpha = .87$; Gil, Wagner & Vega, 2000).

Affiliative Obedience. This cultural value was measured by having participants complete a shortened version of the Affiliative Obedience versus Self-Affirmation measure (Diaz-Guerrero, 1994). Participants responded to a set of statements assessing the level of

endorsement they place on the values of respect and deference towards adults, particularly towards parents. This shortened measure consists of ten items and asks participants to rate items such as “A person must always respect his or her parents” using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Agree*) to 5 (*Strongly Disagree*). Items were reverse scored so that higher scores on this measure indicate higher levels of affiliative obedience endorsement. This measure demonstrated good ($\alpha = .82$) internal consistency within this sample, which was similar to that reported in previous samples ($\alpha = .87$; Martinez & Polo, 2018).

Procedure

Data used for this study were part of a larger longitudinal study that aimed, in part, to identify students at risk for depression and deliver a school-based coping skills intervention as part of a randomized control trial. The cross-sectional data used for the purpose of this study were collected through classroom surveys during the first wave of the larger control trial study (Time 1). Recruitment involved DePaul staff visiting CPS schools and approaching all students in 5th through 7th grade classrooms. Students were asked to take home a recruitment packet that included a letter to their parents or caregivers along with consent forms. Parents were asked to return the form with the student indicating whether they agreed to have their child participate in a survey. Regardless of the parent’s decision, participants received a small gift (e.g., a DePaul University pen, pencil, or another school supply) of their choice, valued at \$3 or less for returning their consent form. DePaul’s research team collected parent consent forms and coordinated a day with the school to conduct the survey.

Students whose parents agreed to their participation and who also assented to participate were included in the survey administration, which lasted approximately 45 minutes. DePaul staff read aloud the questions and items and asked students to follow along and respond privately. For

each group that completed the survey, participants were entered in a raffle consisting of small prizes (e.g., a pair of movie passes or a gift card). Participants were also provided with snacks to share on the day of the surveys.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 2 contains the descriptive statistics and correlations among key study variables. An examination of the means suggests that Latinx youth reported high levels of supportive familism ($M = 4.07$) and affiliative obedience ($M = 3.92$). Overall, 20.1% of Latinx youth reported borderline or clinical levels (i.e., t-scores above 65 or 93rd percentile; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001) of depressive symptoms and 13.1% of Latinx youth reported borderline or clinical levels of anxiety symptoms.

Affiliative obedience and supportive familism were significantly and positively correlated, such that higher endorsement of affiliative obedience was associated with higher endorsement of supportive familism but the correlations do not suggest they are redundant constructs ($r = .36$). In addition, depressive symptoms were significantly and negatively correlated with both family cultural values of affiliative obedience and supportive familism, such that higher endorsement of these two cultural values was associated with lower depressive symptoms. Similarly, anxiety symptoms were significantly and negatively correlated with both cultural values of affiliative obedience and supportive familism, such that higher endorsement of these two cultural values was associated with fewer anxiety symptoms. Both anxiety and depressive symptoms were significantly and positively correlated, meaning that the presence of anxiety symptoms is associated with the presence of depressive symptoms. Nativity and age were examined as potential demographic covariates in the model. Correlations revealed that

nativity was not significantly associated with symptoms of anxiety ($r = -.03$; $p = .35$) nor depression ($r = -.02$; $p = .50$). Age was also not significantly associated with symptoms of anxiety ($r = .03$; $p = .28$) nor depression ($r = .04$; $p = .20$). Therefore, neither age nor nativity will be included as covariates in subsequent analyses.

Endorsement Differences in Family Cultural Values between Girls and Boys

Independent sample t-tests were conducted via SPSS to examine gender differences in the endorsement of family cultural variables of supportive familism and affiliative obedience. As hypothesized, no significant gender differences ($d = -.06$) were found for affiliative obedience (see Table 3). Contrary to the hypothesis, significant differences representing negligent to small effects ($d = .15$) were found among the endorsement of supportive familism such that boys reported significantly higher levels of supportive familism than girls. Girls reported significantly higher depression ($d = .23$) and anxiety symptoms ($d = .35$) than boys, representing small to medium effects.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Key Study Variables (N = 1,020)

	M (SD)	1	2	3	4
1. Affiliative Obedience	3.92 (0.71)	--			
2. Supportive Familism	4.07 (0.81)	.36***	--		
3. Depression Symptoms	0.41 (0.36)	-.26***	-.45***	--	
4. Anxiety Symptoms	0.54 (0.41)	-.15***	-.33***	.66***	--

Note. *** $p < .001$

Table 3*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Key Study Variables by Gender*

Variables	Girls	Boys	<i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
1. Affiliative Obedience	3.90 (0.70)	3.94 (0.73)	0.77	-.06
2. Supportive Familism	4.01 (0.82)	4.13 (0.78)	2.58*	.15
3. Depression Symptoms	0.44 (0.37)	0.36 (.33)	-3.65***	.23
4. Anxiety Symptoms	0.60 (0.43)	0.46 (.37)	-5.88***	.35

Note. Girls ($n = 552$), boys ($n = 468$); * $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .001$

Supportive Familism as a Moderator

Two separate moderation analyses using a bootstrapping approach were conducted via the PROCESSv3.4 (Hayes, 2017) macro in SPSS (Model 1) to test whether supportive familism moderated the relation between affiliative obedience and symptoms of depression and anxiety (Aims 2a and 2b). In bootstrapping, resamples are repeatedly drawn from the data with replacement, and unstandardized estimates of the effect are calculated for each resample (10,000 for this study). These estimates are then used to construct a 95% confidence interval. If the confidence interval does not contain zero, the effect is considered significant. All predictor variables were centered before running any analyses. In the first model, the outcome variable (Y) for analysis was depression symptoms as indicated by the Affective Problems DSM-oriented subscale included in the Youth Self-Report (YSR; Achenbach and Rescorla 2001). The predictor variable (X) for the analysis was affiliative obedience levels as indicated by the Affiliative Obedience versus Self-Affirmation measure (Diaz-Guerrero, 1994). The moderator variable (W) evaluated for the analysis was supportive familism as indicated by The Familism Scale (Gil,

Wagner & Vega, 2000). A parallel model was run for the Anxiety Problems DSM oriented subscale.

Aim 2a - Depression Symptoms. The overall fit for the model including depression symptoms as the dependent variable and affiliative obedience and supportive familism as independent variables was significant [$R^2 = .22$, $F(3, 1016) = 95.82$, $p < .001$]. As hypothesized, the inclusion of the moderator variable on the relation between affiliative obedience and depressive symptoms revealed a statistically significant two-way interaction [$b = .04$, 95% C.I. (.01, .07), $p = .02$]. Additionally, the addition of the highest order unconditional two-way interaction was associated with a significant increase in predicted variance ($F = 5.46$, $p = .02$). The interaction was probed using the Johnson-Neyman technique implemented in PROCESSv3.4 as described by Hayes (2017) and the results were plotted to visually examine the nature of the interaction (see Figure 2). Simple slopes were calculated by treating supportive familism as the moderator variable (see Table 4). At low ($b = -.08$, $p < .001$) and medium ($b = -.05$, $p < .001$) levels of supportive familism, higher levels of affiliative obedience were associated with fewer depressive symptoms. However, when Latinx youth reported high levels of supportive familism, affiliative obedience was not associated with depression symptoms ($b = -.02$, $p = .23$). As Figure 2 shows, Latinx youth who endorse low levels of both affiliative obedience and supportive familism reported the highest levels of depressive symptoms.

Aim 2b - Anxiety Symptoms. The overall fit for the model including anxiety symptoms as the dependent variable and affiliative obedience and supportive familism as independent variables was significant [$R^2 = .33$, $F(3, 1016) = 41.44$, $p < .001$]. However, contrary to the hypothesis, the inclusion of the moderator variable on the relation between affiliative obedience and anxiety symptoms revealed a non-significant interaction. In other words, supportive

familism did not moderate the relation between affiliative obedience and anxiety symptoms [$b = .01, 95\% \text{ C.I. } (-.03, .05), p = .66$].

Table 4

The Conditional Effects of Affiliative Obedience on Depressive Symptoms by Levels of Supportive Familism

Supportive Familism	Effect	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
Low	-.81	.02	-4.49	<.001***	-.12	-.05
Medium	.00	.01	-3.64	<.001***	-.08	-.03
High	.81	.02	-1.21	.23	-.06	.02

Note. $N = 1,020$. LLCI = Lower level of confidence interval; ULCI = upper level of confidence interval.

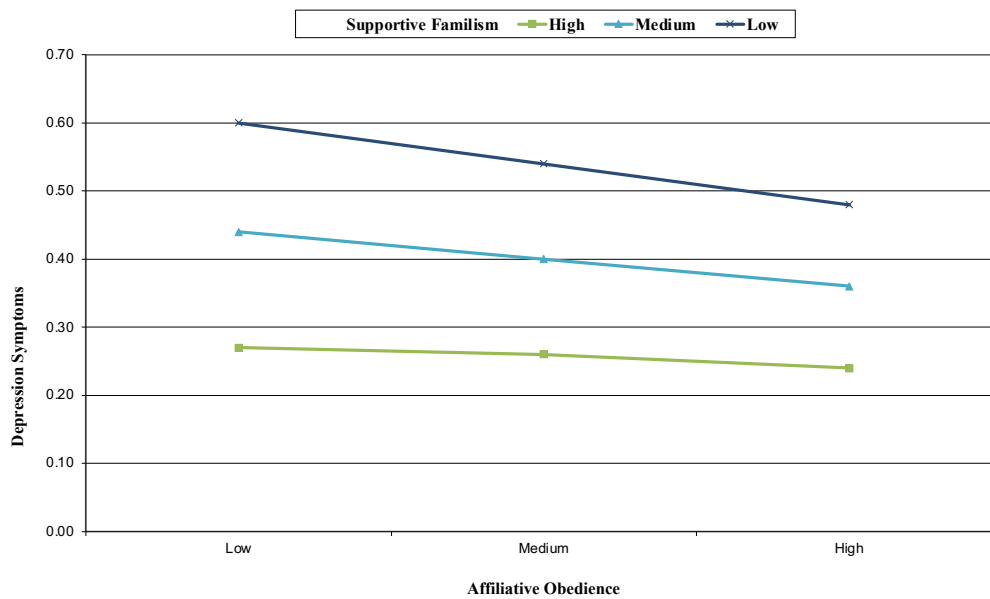


Figure 2. Supportive Familism moderates the relation between affiliative obedience and depression symptoms.

Gender as a Moderating Moderator

Two separate moderated moderation analyses using a bootstrapping approach were conducted via the PROCESSv3.4 macro in SPSS (Model 3) to test whether gender moderated the moderational relation of supportive familism on the relation between affiliative obedience and internalizing symptoms of depression and anxiety (Aims 3a and 3b). The variables for these analyses remained the same as Aims 1a and 1b, with the addition of gender as an additional moderator.

Aim 3a - Depression Symptoms. The overall fit for the model including depression symptoms as the dependent variable and gender, affiliative obedience, and supportive familism as independent variables was significant [$R^2 = .24$, $F(7, 1012) = 46.12$, $p < .001$]. The inclusion of gender as a moderator on the moderational effects of supportive familism on the relation between affiliative obedience and depression symptoms via Model 3 revealed a significant three-way interaction [$b = .10$, 95% C.I. (.04, .17), $p < .001$]. Additionally, the addition of the highest order unconditional three-way interaction was associated with a significant increase in variance ($F = 11.10$, $p < .001$). The interactions were probed using the Johnson-Neyman Technique implemented in PROCESSv3.4 as described by Hayes (2017) and the results were plotted separately for boys and girls to visually examine the nature of the moderated moderation effects (see Figure 3). Among Latinx girls, significant slopes were found among those with low ($b = -.15$, $p < .001$) and medium ($b = -.08$, $p < .001$), but not high ($b = -.02$, $p = .50$) levels of supportive familism. In contrast, as shown in Table 5, affiliative obedience did not predict depressive symptoms for Latinx boys, regardless of their reported levels of supportive familism. As shown in Figure 3, Latinx girls who endorse low levels of both affiliative obedience and supportive familism reported the highest levels of depressive symptoms. In contrast, Latinx boys

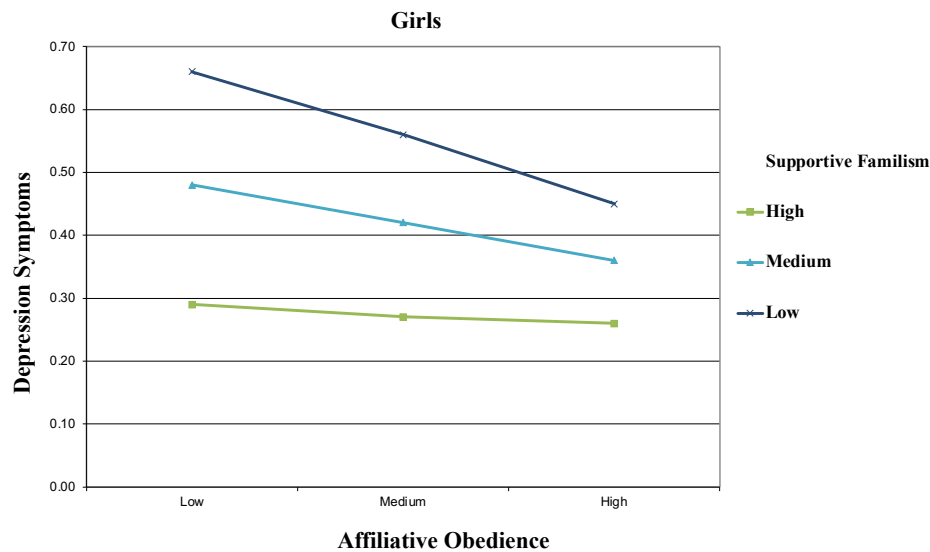
with low supportive familism reported the highest levels of depression, regardless of their affiliative obedience levels.

Table 5

Conditional Effects of Affiliative Obedience on Depressive Symptoms by Levels of Supportive Familism and Gender

Supportive Familism	Effect	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI	
Girls							
Low	-.81	-.15	.02	-6.04	<.001**	-.20	-.10
Medium	.00	-.08	.02	-4.06	<.001**	-.12	-.04
High	.81	-.02	.03	-.67	.50	-.07	.04
Boys							
Low	-.81	.00	.03	.07	.94	-.05	.06
Medium	.00	-.02	.02	-.84	.40	-.06	.02
High	.81	-.04	.03	-1.31	.19	-.09	.02

Note. *N* = 1,020. LLCI = Lower level of confidence interval; ULCI = upper level of confidence interval.



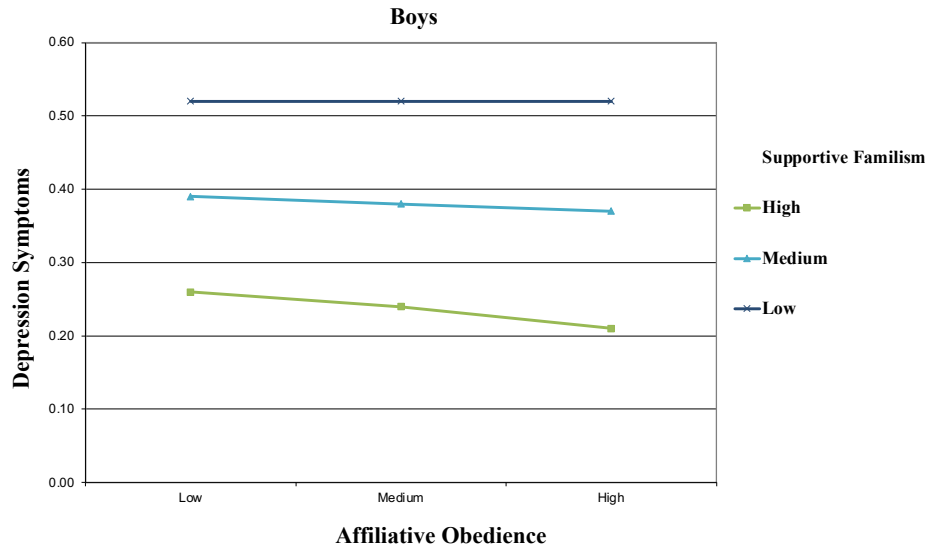


Figure 3

Gender Moderates the Moderational Effects of Supportive Familism on the Relation between Affiliative Obedience and Depression Symptoms

Aim 3b - Anxiety Symptoms. The overall fit for the model including anxiety symptoms as the dependent variable and gender, affiliative obedience, and supportive familism as independent variables was significant [$R^2 = .37$, $F(7, 1012) = 23.60$, $p < .001$]. The inclusion of gender as a moderator on the moderational effects of supportive familism on the relation between affiliative obedience and anxiety symptoms revealed a significant three-way interaction [$b = .09$, 95% C.I. (.01, .17), $p = .02$]. Additionally, the addition of the highest order unconditional three-way interaction was associated with a significant increase in variance ($F = 5.41$, $p = .02$). The interactions were probed using the Johnson-Neyman Technique implemented in PROCESSv3.4 as described by Hayes (2017) and the results were plotted separately for boys and girls to visually examine the nature of the moderated moderation effects (Figure 4). Among Latinx girls, significant slopes were found among those with low ($b = -.08$, $p = .01$), but not medium ($b = -.04$, $p = .15$) nor high ($b = .001$, $p = .97$) levels of supportive familism. In contrast, as shown in Table 6, affiliative obedience did not predict anxiety symptoms for Latinx boys, regardless of

their reported levels of supportive familism. As shown in Figure 4, Latinx girls who endorse low levels of both affiliative obedience and supportive familism reported the highest levels of anxiety symptoms. In contrast, Latinx boys with low supported familism but high affiliative obedience reported the highest levels of anxiety.

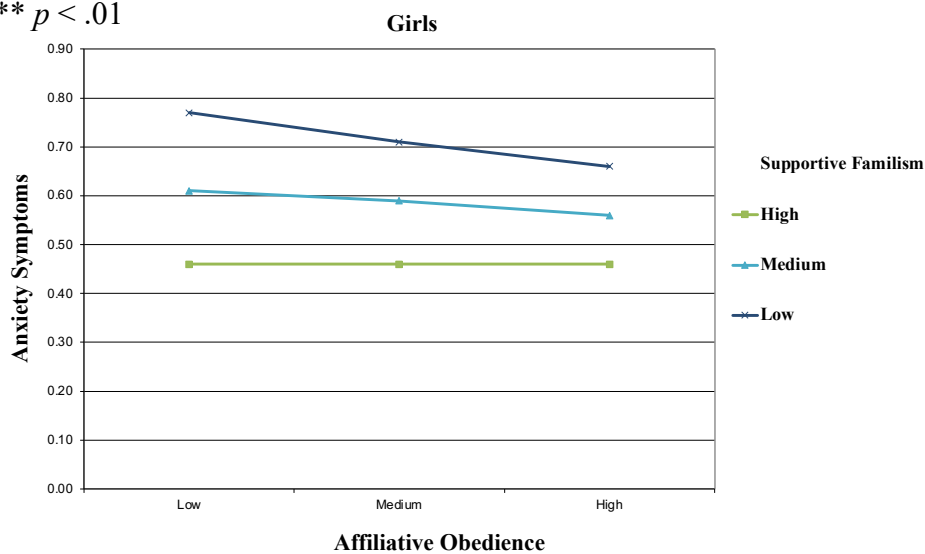
Table 6

Conditional Effects of Affiliative Obedience on Anxiety Symptoms by Levels of Supportive Familism and Gender

Supportive Familism	Effect	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI	
Girls							
Low	-.81	-.08	.03	-2.49	.01**	-.13	-.02
Medium	.00	-.04	.03	-1.46	.15	-.09	.01
High	.81	.00	.03	.04	.97	-.07	.07
Boys							
Low	-.81	.03	.03	.82	.41	-.04	.10
Medium	.00	-.01	.03	-.22	.83	-.06	.05
High	.81	-.04	.04	-1.13	.26	-.11	.03

Note. *N* = 1,020. LLCI = Lower level of confidence interval; ULCI = upper level of confidence

interval. ** *p* < .01



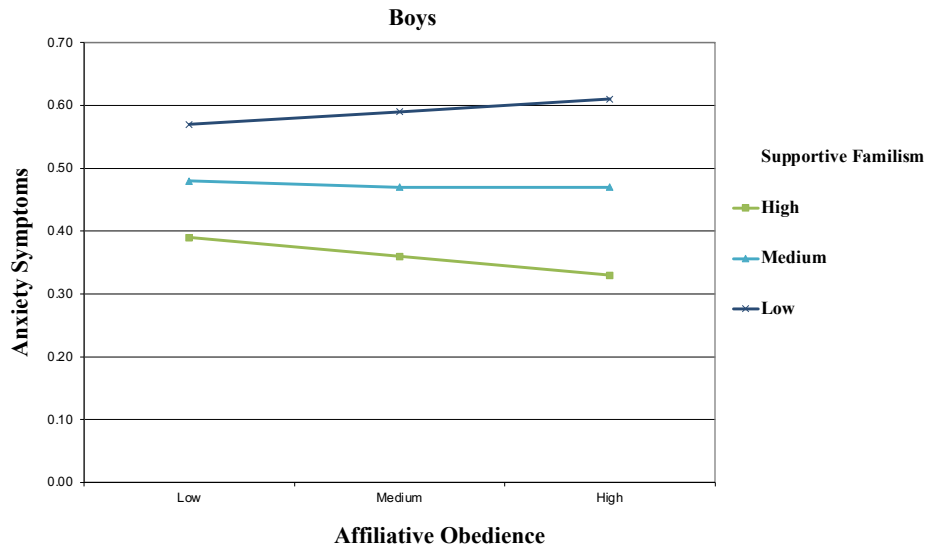


Figure 4

Gender Moderates the Moderational Effects of Supportive Familism on the Relation between Affiliative Obedience and Anxiety Symptoms

Gender and Family Cultural Variables

Results from Aim 3a and 3b suggest that affiliative obedience is related to girls' depression and anxiety symptoms but not related to boy's internalizing symptoms while supportive familism is related to both girls and boys internalizing symptoms. Although this was not initially one of the aims of the study, further probing was conducted to compare the correlations for boys and girls between the family cultural values and internalizing measures (see Table 7). Using Fisher's Z-transformations, significant differences in the correlations between boys and girls were found for the association between affiliative obedience and depression ($z = -2.21, p = .03$), but not between affiliative obedience and anxiety ($z = -.97, p = .33$). When looking at the correlations between supportive familism and internalizing symptoms among boys and girls, Fisher Z-transformations revealed no significant gender differences for depression ($z = -0.99, p = .32$) or anxiety ($z = -.71, p = .48$).

Table 7*Correlations Between Family Cultural Values and Internalizing Symptoms by Gender*

	1	2	3	4
1. Affiliative Obedience	-	.36***	-.32***	-.18***
2. Supportive Familism	.36***	-	-.47***	-.34***
3. Depression Symptoms	-.19***	-.42***	-	.68***
4. Anxiety Symptoms	-.12**	-.30***	.60***	-

Note. Girls ($n = 552$) are reflected along the top half of the diagonal, boys ($n = 468$) reflected along bottom half. ** $p < .01$ and *** $p < .001$

Discussion

This study was the first to analyze the interactive effects of supportive familism and affiliative obedience on Latinx youth internalizing symptoms. Previous studies in this area have studied only one cultural value (Aceves et al., 2020; Ayon et al., 2010; Fuligni et al., 1999; German et al., 2008; Katiria Perez & Cruess 2011), examined cultural values separately (Cupito et al., 2015, Gomez and Gudiño 2022), or measured vague constructs in place of cultural values (Smokowski & Bacallao, 2007; Umaña & Updegraff, 2007). Additionally, a limited number of studies have considered how gender can influence the relation between cultural values and Latinx youth mental health (Cupito et al., 2015; Lac et al., 2011). Consistent with The Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies (Coll et al., 1996), the current study used social stratification constructs of culture and gender to better understand Latinx youth development. Results found that cultural values can shape the degree to which Latinx youth endorse internalizing symptoms and that endorsement of these values may be especially adaptive for girls.

The first aim of this study was to examine gender differences in the endorsement of family cultural values of affiliative obedience and supportive familism. This study extends previous research findings that Latinx boys and girls tend to report the same levels of affiliative obedience (Cupito et al., 2015; Lorenzo et al., 2012; Stein & Polo, 2013). While most research has found that girls tend to endorse higher levels of the broader family cultural value of attitudinal familism, this study found that boys reported higher levels of supportive familism, a specific facet of attitudinal familism. Results replicate research findings that Latinx girls report significantly lower supportive familism scores compared to boys (Arizaga, Polo & Martinez-Torteya, 2020). Results also demonstrate the need to separately measure specific dimensions of multi-faceted family cultural values such as familism to uncover gender differences.

The second aim of this study was to determine whether supportive familism moderated the relation between affiliative obedience and symptoms of depression and anxiety. Findings partially supported this hypothesis. Higher affiliative obedience was associated with lower depression symptoms, and this relation was stronger among Latinx youth reporting low and medium but not high levels of supportive familism, potentially due to the overriding protective effect high levels of supportive familism can have on depressive symptoms among Latinx youth. Significant moderation analyses also revealed that youth reporting low levels of both supportive familism and affiliative obedience endorsed the highest levels of depression symptoms. This is important as these family cultural values can run counter to U.S. mainstream cultural values of individuation, independence, and autonomy. Results suggests that adoption of these dominant cultural values may place some Latinx youth at higher risk for internalizing problems (Huq et al., 2016).

Supportive familism did not moderate the relation between affiliative obedience and symptoms of anxiety, revealing that regardless of supportive familism levels, affiliative obedience was not associated with this form of internalizing distress among Latinx youth. Notably, higher levels of supportive familism were correlated with lower anxiety symptoms. Future research should focus on examining how different types of cultural values can interact with anxiety symptoms and whether other social constructs present in Latinx youth's environment synergistically result in lower anxiety symptoms. Of note, one limitation of this study is that anxiety symptoms were measured globally, and previous research has noted that cultural values can be protective of some forms of anxiety (e.g., social) and not others (e.g., panic; Martinez et al., 2012). This study was the first to analyze the combined effects that multiple cultural values can have on depression and anxiety symptoms among Latinx youth. These results shed light into the unique ways that these two cultural values might lead to improved mental health among Latinx youth.

The final aim of this study was to explore whether gender moderates the moderational relation supportive familism has between affiliative obedience and internalizing symptoms of depression and anxiety. When looking at depression symptoms, findings revealed that these interactions are significantly different between boys and girls and the combination of supportive familism and affiliative obedience values may be especially beneficial for girls. Affiliative obedience is associated with particularly lower depression symptoms when higher levels of this family cultural value are present among girls who endorse low and medium levels of supportive familism. Similar to Cupito and colleagues (2015), current results revealed that higher endorsement of affiliative obedience was associated with lower levels of depression for Latinx girls only. Further Fisher's Z transformations also revealed that the degree of affiliative

obedience endorsement is more closely related to symptoms of depression for girls and much less so for boys. The current study was able to expand Cupito and colleagues (2015) previous research and found that it is important to consider gender even when evaluating the combined effects of multiple cultural values. Analyses uncovered that girls who endorsed the highest levels of both supportive familism and affiliative obedience reported the lowest depression symptoms. Results demonstrate that the combination of multiple cultural values, in this case affiliative obedience and supportive familism are synergistically associated with lower depression symptoms for girls. This was not the case for boys, suggesting there is no additive effect of endorsing both cultural values for them. Research on the socialization differences between Latinx boys and girls based on traditional gender roles may serve as a rationale for these results. Parents may incentivize girls more for obeying and acting respectful than they do boys. Alternatively, girls may be punished more than boys in similar situations, leading to the significant negative association we see between affiliative obedience and depression among girls but not boys (Cupito et al., 2015).

A similar pattern was found for anxiety symptomatology. Findings revealed that the moderational relation supportive familism has on affiliative obedience and anxiety symptoms is significantly different between boys and girls such that it is particularly beneficial for girls. Affiliative obedience is especially associated with lower anxiety symptoms when higher levels of this family cultural value are present among girls who endorse low levels of supportive familism. On the other hand, affiliative obedience does not seem to predict anxiety symptoms for boys regardless of their reported levels of supportive familism. Previous research did not find that gender moderated the relation between familism and anxiety (Aceves et al., 2019). The present study was able to expand on this research and found that Latinx gender is critical to

understanding the endorsement of anxiety symptoms when simultaneously considering multiple cultural values. Results demonstrate that certain cultural values may yield the most adaptive outcomes when endorsed in combination with other cultural values. Although familism and affiliative obedience did not yield additional benefits for boys in this sample, they may with other forms of maladjustment. Research has found significantly strong and negative associations between affiliative obedience and externalizing symptoms (Martinez & Polo 2018). Future research should continue exploring the combined effects of multiple cultural values on other forms of maladjustment among Latinx youth. It is possible that the combination of multiple cultural values is interactively associated with lower externalizing symptoms and especially beneficial for boys, whose endorsement of affiliative obedience may be more closely related to externalizing symptoms rather than internalizing symptoms.

Supportive familism, on the other hand, is associated with low internalizing symptoms among both genders. Fisher Z-transformations revealed no significant gender differences between the correlations of supportive familism and anxiety nor depression symptoms, suggesting that the endorsement of supportive familism is closely related to internalizing symptoms of both depression and anxiety for girls and boys. These results add to past research findings of familism and its function as a promotive factor for internalizing symptoms among other aspects of Latinx youth development (e.g., educational outcomes, family relationships, conflict, and externalizing symptoms; Cahill et al., 2021).

The inclusion of gender sheds light into the importance of adapting interventions and clinical treatments according to gender among Latinx youth. For girls, recognizing that the combination of affiliative obedience and supporting familism will be associated with the best adjustment may help clinicians reinforce these cultural values when they are exhibited by Latinx

girls with depression or anxiety. Additionally, emphasizing to parents of Latinx youth that asking their children to be obedient and respect others without emphasizing warmth and supportive familism may be less effective, is important for clinicians to consider when working with Latinx youth. Further, when studying internalizing symptoms among Latinx youth, it is important to evaluate depression and anxiety symptoms separately despite their comorbidity and overlapping presentations. Results from separate analyses revealed that, among girls, the endorsement of multiple cultural values are interactively associated with lower symptoms of depression even more so than anxiety symptoms. Future research on cultural values and anxiety symptoms is important to further expand on ways to help Latinx boys and girls who are endorsing this specific type of internalizing distress.

These results emphasize the need for clinicians to operate using a culturally competent lens when working with Latinx youth and become cognizant of their potential biases when highlighting aspects in line with dominant culture (e.g., independence, autonomy) throughout treatment. Given the differing cultural values and socialization of gender within Latinx culture, de-emphasizing the importance of cultivating respectful relationships with their elders in order to form strong interpersonal relationships with their family and community (e.g., affiliative obedience) may be less effective when working with Latinx families, particularly among Latinx girls. Furthermore, addressing Latinx youth depression and anxiety may bidirectionally facilitate warmer relationships among Latinx parents and their children, leading to further protection via increases in supportive familism due to reductions in internalizing symptoms.

Limitations and Future Directions

The findings of this study should be considered with certain limitations in mind. First, this study examined the influence of multiple cultural values on internalizing symptoms across

gender among Latinx youth cross-sectionally. Cross-sectional designs are unable to shed light onto how constructs are exactly related or change over time. Using the current study design, it cannot be determined whether lack of cultural value endorsement leads to internalizing symptoms or whether the presence of internalizing symptoms leads to lower endorsement of these cultural values. Therefore, future research should expand on these findings through longitudinal studies. Studying the presence of multiple cultural values among Latinx youth would reveal if changes in such cultural values could lead to different mental health outcomes between boys and girls among this population. For instance, does the long-term presence of supportive familism and affiliative obedience experienced in Latinx culture cause a reduction in depression and anxiety symptoms for girls? How is this relation seen differently in Latinx boys? Longitudinal studies of internalizing symptoms focusing on multiple cultural values among Latinx youth are especially sparse and warranted. Research examining the presence of multiple cultural values and changes in internalizing symptoms among Latinx youth over time can demonstrate when these cultural values are the most beneficial, revealing critical timepoints for interventions.

Moreover, the current study focused on internalizing problems only. Research has shown that cultural values are protective against other forms of maladjustment such as externalizing problems and substance use (Martinez & Polo 2018; Lac et al., 2011). Future studies can examine the protective effects of multiple cultural values on other forms of maladjustments and explore these relations among boys and girls separately, as some may be especially protective for one gender over the other as found in this study. Future studies should also explore if the interactions found in this study replicate among clinical samples. Lastly, future studies should explore other forms of attitudinal familism and familism more broadly (e.g., behavioral, or structural familism)

to determine whether other aspects of familism have similar protective effects on depression and anxiety among Latinx youth.

It is vital that future studies also examine the diversity in gender identity. Polo and colleagues (2023) found that gender non-conforming students were at the highest risk for depression, social anxiety, and generalized anxiety, suggesting that the focus of cultural value endorsement may be critical among these Latinx youth to better understand their distress. Furthermore, given that most of this study's sample was comprised of 2nd generation Latinx youth, future studies should continue exploring these relations among samples of 1st and 3rd generation Latinx students. The current studies sample consists of largely Mexican American students which warrants future research focusing on other Latinx subgroups in order to determine whether the results observed in the current study are generalizable to other Latinx subgroups within the U.S.

The current study makes several contributions to cultural values' literature as it pertains to the mental health of Latinx youth. The study's large sample size and its focus on early adolescents are particular strengths in this study. Studying protective factors among Latinx youth in this developmental stage is vital due to their high risk of internalizing symptoms. Most notably, it is the first to analyze the interaction of supportive familism and affiliative obedience in relation to the development of depression and anxiety symptoms among Latinx youth. Results showed that family cultural values are associated with lower depression and anxiety and that the combination of affiliative obedience and supportive familism are associated with particularly lower depression and anxiety symptoms for girls. This examination provides insight into the similarities and differences of how cultural values are experienced between Latinx boys and girls, and how these experiences affect their mental health differently. The findings of this study

are evidence of why the presence of multiple cultural values and gender are crucial to understanding Latinx youth mental health development.

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Footnotes

¹It is important to point out the sparse acknowledgment of gender fluidity throughout research that focuses on Latinx youth. All data discussed throughout this study categorizes youth as cisgender which relates to a person whose sense of identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex. Future research should measure gender as fluid rather than categorical.

²The term, “Latinx” rather than “Latino/a” is used throughout this study as it allows for the inclusion of individuals that exist outside of the gender binary (Cardemil et al., 2019). “Latinx” is also an umbrella term which is inclusive of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds (Kapke et al., 2017).