BANGLADESHI AND EUROPEAN AMERICAN MOTHERS’ BELIEFS ABOUT PEER-DIRECTED AGGRESSION, SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL, AND SHYNESS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

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A Thesis

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Abstract

of

BANGLADESHI AND EUROPEAN AMERICAN MOTHERS’ BELIEFS ABOUT PEER-DIRECTED AGGRESSION, SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL, AND SHYNESS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

by

Erika S. Scholl

The purpose of the current study was to compare Bangladeshi and European American mothers’ beliefs about young children’s aggression, social withdrawal, and shyness in a cross-cultural context. Twenty-three mothers from Bangladesh and 27 mothers from the United States, with at least one child between the ages of two and five, completed questionnaires to rate their emotional responses, causal attributions, and parenting strategies in response to the three problem social behaviors depicted in hypothetical vignettes. Both Bangladeshi and European American mothers reported higher ratings of anger, disappointment, and embarrassment for aggressive behavior than socially withdrawn and shy behavior; however, Bangladeshi mothers reported higher ratings for anxiousness for all three behaviors than European American mothers. Bangladeshi mothers were also more likely to report the problem behaviors as unintentional. European American mothers were twice as likely to recommend high power parenting strategies involving forcing the appropriate behavior and
punishment as the Bangladeshi mothers in response to aggressive behavior. Both
Bangladeshi and European American mothers reported little distinction between
responses for social withdrawal and shyness. The findings were discussed in the
context of how maternal beliefs influence child socialization and were compared
to past results in other cultures.

_____________________  Committee Chair
Christi A. Cervantes, Ph.D.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

Previous research indicates that parental beliefs and ideas predict children’s social development and success in peer relationships (Rubin, Bukowski & Parker, 1998). This is because parents’ beliefs and ideas about socializing children relate to their behaviors with their children. This parental behavior in turn influences how a child will behave in their social environment and in interactions with peers. Therefore, understanding parents’ beliefs, and in particular parents’ beliefs in a cross-cultural context, can further understanding of parental influence on social development and peer relationships (Rubin et al., 1998).

The goal of the present study was to expand the current body of cross-cultural research on maternal beliefs about young children’s aggression, social withdrawal, and shyness. More specifically, the study compared Bangladeshi and European American mothers’ reported emotional reactions, parenting strategies and attributions regarding these social behaviors. The literature on cross-cultural variation in parenting frequently highlights the difference between individualistic parents from “Western” countries, such as the United States and Germany, and collectivist parents from “Non-Western” countries such as China and Japan (Harkness, Super & van Tijen, 2000); the difference has been described as one of the most distinct types of cultural variation (Schneider, 1999).
Collectivist cultures are group goal oriented, whereas individualistic cultures place importance on individual accomplishment over group achievement (Schneider, 1999). Bangladeshi mothers’ beliefs about young children’s social behaviors may reflect collectivist ideologies similar to what is found in other Asian samples.

To examine cross-cultural variation in mothers’ beliefs about young children’s social withdrawal, shyness, and aggression, Bangladeshi and European American mothers responded to vignettes depicting two examples of each behavior and rated their emotional reactions, parenting strategies, and attributions. Specific research questions included the following: (a) Do Bangladeshi and European American mothers report different emotional reactions for socially withdrawn, shy or aggressive child behavior? (b) Do they differ in attributing the behavior to internal (dispositional) or external (situational) causes? (c) Do they differ in the strategies they recommend for such behavior? (Cheah & Rubin, 2004)

Statement of the Problem

Problem social skills such as aggression, social withdrawal and shyness in early childhood present a multitude of developmental challenges for children. For example, studies have shown that maladaptive social skills such as aggression and social withdrawal can lead to many other social problems, including peer rejection in childhood (Cheah & Rubin, 2004; Rubin et al., 1998). Additionally, several studies have linked peer rejection to poor school performance and delinquency (Rubin et al, 1998).
Parents’ reactions and strategies regarding their children’s maladaptive social behavior reflect their parenting beliefs (Cheah & Chirkov, 2008). Also, parents’ ideas about the way one should respond to an aggressive, socially withdrawn, or shy child affect their strategies for handling social interactions with their children. For example, a parent who believes that aggression or social withdrawal should be handled with sensitive, low-power parenting strategies will treat their socially maladapted child differently than a parent who believes these children should be handled with firm, high-power parenting strategies. To illustrate the importance of parenting on child outcomes, past research indicates that children subject to high-power parenting strategies report lower self-esteem and higher levels of antisocial behavior in both adolescence and childhood. By comparison, children whose parents use low-power parenting strategies have been found to be more successful in social situations, have higher motivation toward academic success and are more cooperative (Coplan, Hastings, Lagace-Sequin, & Moulton, 2002). And as Rubin et al. (1998) explain, what a parent believes and how they react to their child’s behavior affect their child’s development and social behavior, which in turn can affect the child’s peer interactions and interpersonal relationships. It is this link between parent, child and social behavior that underscores the importance of parent beliefs.

Parents’ beliefs and parenting strategies regarding young children’s social development are shaped by culture. For example, in the Chinese culture, reserved and obedient behavior by children is considered desirable for group harmony whereas in the United States these qualities have been found to be negatively perceived by caregivers,
peers and teachers (Cheah & Rubin, 2004). Differing cultural values, parenting styles and childhood temperamental characteristics interact as parents meet the challenge of parenting their developing children (Porter et al., 2005). The present study explored the parenting beliefs of mothers in the South Asian country of Bangladesh. The research compared maternal beliefs about aggression, social withdrawal, and shyness using both a Bangladeshi and a European American sample.

**Significance of the Study**

According to Super and Harkness (1997), parental beliefs are part of the cultural structure of child development, and an understanding of developmental outcomes can result from studying the cultural environment, or “developmental niche,” of a child. The developmental niche is described as an open system and includes three subsystems: (a) physical and social settings, (b) customs of childrearing, and (c) the beliefs and goals of the caretakers. The present study used this framework and others to understand how the participants’ beliefs reflect their culture and how Bangladeshi and European American mothers differed from each other. Understanding the beliefs of Bangladeshi mothers is important in that very little child development research has been conducted with Bangladeshi families.

Of the recent cross-cultural studies on parental beliefs, those that expand the work of Mills and Rubin are the focus of this research. Mills and Rubin (1990) used hypothetical vignettes describing instances of aggression and social withdrawal and asked
parents to give an explanation for the child’s behavior, as well as how they would feel about their child behaving that way and how they would handle it. Three such recent studies have used the vignettes developed by Mills and Rubin to analyze the emotional reactions, attributions and strategies of mothers in different cultures. Parental beliefs about a child’s peer-directed aggression and social withdrawal were examined in Chinese, South Korean, Italian and European-American families (Cheah & Park, 2006; Cheah & Rubin, 2004; Schneider, Attili, Vermigli & Younger, 1997).

In a study of Mainland Chinese mothers, Cheah and Rubin (2004) recorded negative emotional responses for both social withdrawal and aggression. These mothers most frequently reported feeling angry in response to aggression and anxious in response to withdrawal behavior, while the European American mothers more frequently reported feeling angry as well as disappointed and embarrassed about aggression and puzzled and anxious about withdrawal. In examining the results of attribution, the Chinese mothers attributed social withdrawal more often to external causes than did their European American counterparts. Additionally, the Chinese mothers focused on directive and high power strategies. The authors were surprised to learn that their assumptions about the Chinese mothers’ views on social withdrawal were not more positive and postulated that the reason social withdrawal elicited more negative response than expected may point to a difference in the perception of social withdrawal versus shyness (Cheah & Rubin, 2004).

Using similar methodology, Cheah and Park (2006) recorded South Korean mothers’ negative emotional reactions for both aggression and withdrawal, with anger the
most common reaction to aggression. South Korean parents reported external attributions for aggression; however, unlike Chinese mothers, these mothers believed withdrawal was more frequently attributed to internal causes. Also in the South Korean study, parenting strategies reflected high-power and directive for aggression and low-power and indirect for withdrawal (Cheah & Park, 2006). To expand on this previous research, measures of shyness have been added to the current research to detect any difference in maternal report between withdrawn and shy behavior.

Bangladesh is a developing country that faces many environmental, economic and social challenges. The cultural practices of Bangladesh can be linked with those of Pakistan, which it was part of before becoming an independent nation in 1971. Like Pakistan, the dominant religion in Bangladesh is Islam, while neighboring India’s dominant religion is Hinduism. Little research has been published in English on Bangladesh in the field of child development. For this reason, and for the desire to further understanding of the people of developing nations, the present study analyzed how Bangladeshi and European American parental beliefs reflect their culture and how those beliefs may compare to those of recent related research in other cultures.
Methods

Participants

Twenty-three Bangladeshi mothers and 27 European American mothers of at least one preschool-aged child were asked to participate in the study. The mothers were recruited at preschools and by word of mouth in Sacramento, California and through contacts in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Mothers in both groups were middle to upper socio-economic status and lived in highly populated urban cities. The mothers in both cultures were highly educated with nearly all possessing a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree.

Procedure

This was a survey study in which demographic and maternal proactive belief questionnaires were given to Bangladeshi and European American mothers to complete. For the data collection in Bangladesh, all materials and measures given to the Bangladeshi mothers were translated into Bengali by the researcher’s family members living in Dhaka. Additionally, an English version of the materials was made available to these mothers. The packet of materials were given to the mothers by the sister-in-law of the researcher to protect the anonymity of the participants. Mothers were directed to fill out the demographic survey and the questionnaire in either Bengali or English and return them to the researcher’s contact.

For data collection in the United States, the packets of materials were given to a preschool teacher at one preschool and a preschool parent at another preschool to
distribute at their preschools in Sacramento, California. The mothers were instructed to return the measures to the distributor at their child’s school in the provided envelope to be collected by the researcher at a later date. Additionally, the materials were distributed by associates of the researcher through word of mouth. In both cases, to protect the anonymity of the participants, the materials were not returned directly to the researcher, but to the researcher’s contact at the setting.

**Measures**

The two measures used for data collection for this study were a brief demographic survey and the *Maternal Proactive Beliefs Questionnaire*. First, a demographic survey was used to determine socio-economic status and background information for the participants. It inquired about the participants’ age, educational level, occupation, and religious affiliation. The educational level categories were adjusted for the Bangladeshi mothers to reflect the accurate education levels for those living in Dhaka. Second, the *Maternal Proactive Beliefs Questionnaire* was used to measure the mothers’ emotional responses to hypothetical instances of children’s social behaviors, as well as their attributions, parenting strategies and goals regarding these behaviors. Mothers indicated their emotional reactions and attributions on rating scales; they indicated their strategies and goals in open-ended written responses. This questionnaire included four hypothetical vignettes depicting two instances of social withdrawal and two instances of peer-directed aggression, as originally developed by Mills and Rubin (1990). It also included two hypothetical vignettes illustrating shyness, with one developed by Coplan et al. (2002)
and the second shyness vignette created by the researcher. These two vignettes were added to build on the work of Cheah and Rubin (2004) and to capture any difference in the responses of mothers for social withdrawal versus shyness.

The Bangladeshi data did not need to be translated into English before being coded because all participants chose to complete the measures in English. The data were then analyzed using Analysis of Variance in SPSS. Comparison of the results for both groups was used to find any significant cultural differences in the data as it pertains to the categories of emotional reaction, attribution, and strategies of the mothers.

**Definition of Terms**

**Social Behavior Terms**

*Aggression* definitions can vary; however, most definitions of physical aggression, as described in the current study, include hostile acts such as intentionally hitting, kicking, throwing objects and pushing another in a potentially harmful manner (McEvoy, Estrem, Rodriguez & Olson, 2003). According to Burgess, Rubin, Cheah and Nelson (2001), *social withdrawal* is defined as consistent solitary behavior with both unfamiliar and familiar peers and *shyness* is defined as social inhibition in new social situations. Miller (1995) states that *attributions* are to what a person attributes a behavior; an *internal attribution* is one believed to be caused by the child’s disposition and considered stable over time whereas an *external attribution* is one believed to be caused by the situation and not considered stable over time.
Parenting Terms

Cheah and Rubin (2004) distinguish between high-power parenting strategies and low-power parenting strategies. *High power strategies* are strategies involving punishment, demands or threats, and *low-power strategies* are non-directive strategies such as questioning the child, providing more social opportunities, and the use of light persuasion.

Culture Terms

*Collectivist* cultures are defined as group goal oriented, whereas *individualistic* cultures place importance on individual accomplishment over group achievement (Schneider et al., 1997). *Parents’ belief systems* are important aspects of culture, in that parenting beliefs inform practices that are embedded in cultural values and norms. In this way, parents’ beliefs, or ethnotheories, represent an important component of an integrated cultural system, or developmental niche (Super & Harkness, 1997).

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations for this research. First, the sample size was small for a survey study. Second, the participants in both groups were limited to middle and upper-income mothers living in urban area and there were no direct measures of social
status. Third, the hypothetical vignettes used to examine mothers’ beliefs depicted limited types of social withdrawal, shyness and aggression, which may affect the analysis. As Cheah and Park (2006) explain, there are many other types of social withdrawal and aggression than are represented in the vignettes and many other situations that can occur than what was represented by the *Maternal Proactive Beliefs Questionnaire*. Finally, paternal beliefs were not used for this research; and as Cheah and Rubin (2004) outline in their research, increasing child care responsibilities for fathers indicates the need to understand how fathers shape the socialization of their children.

**Organization of the Project/Study**

The current chapter has provided an overview of the study. Chapter 2 includes the literature review, in which the recent published work on culture, aggression, social withdrawal, shyness and parent beliefs will be examined. Chapter 3 details the methods used for the research, including information on research design, participants, measures and procedures. Chapter 4 reports the statistical analysis and results of the research, and Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings.
Parental beliefs about children’s social development are one of several crucial catalysts that direct parenting behavior and thus have the ability to influence developmental outcomes (Rubin et al., 1998). Specifically, parental beliefs relate to parenting behaviors that then have implications for a child’s social skills and peer relationships (Rubin et al., 1998). Although the traits of the child, the role of peers, and the child’s environment play pivotal roles in social development, previous research indicates that parenting beliefs, particularly maternal beliefs, represent an important area of research in child development due to key role parents play in social development (Cheah & Chirkov, 2008; Cheah & Park, 2006; Cheah & Rubin, 2004; Schneider et al., 1997; Super & Harkness, 1997). The current study focuses on the maternal beliefs about young children’s aggression, social withdrawal and shyness.

Additionally, because social development does not occur in isolation, analysis of development in a cultural context allows for a richer perspective on how a child’s environment is formed and organized. Understanding parents’ beliefs in different cultures illuminates a piece of the environmental puzzle that should be considered to reveal the entire picture of development (Super & Harkness, 1997). Thus, the current study takes a cross-cultural approach to mothers’ beliefs about young children’s social behaviors, comparing Bangladeshi and US mothers. Bangladesh is an under-studied culture in the study of child development and one that could provide an interesting cultural contrast to
U.S. mothers due to Bangladesh’s developing status, homogenous population and religious practices. Understanding maternal beliefs about parenting in different cultures can illuminate one of the most influential roles in the social development of children, the role of the caregiver. Analyzing parenting beliefs in different cultures offers the ability to widen our understanding of how mothers react to problem social skills in their young children and what their goals and strategies may reflect about the culture in which they are embedded. The current study compares Bangladeshi and European American mothers’ emotional reactions, attributions and parenting strategies regarding young children’s aggression, social withdrawal and shyness.

Young children’s problem social behaviors such as aggression, social withdrawal and shyness have been shown to have a negative impact on children in many aspects of their lives: internally, academically and socially (Cheah & Rubin, 2004). Analyzing parents’ beliefs cross-culturally allows for reflection on how culture shapes the ideas about child rearing and how beliefs about problem social behavior in children should be addressed by parents in accordance with accepted cultural norms (Super & Harkness, 1997). As discussed later in this chapter, problem social skills without intervention have been found to expose a child to greater risk of poor developmental outcomes including peer rejection, delinquency, and poor academic performance (Rubin et al., 1998). As Super and Harkness (1997) point out, gaining understanding of how culture influences development can lead to pathways for culturally sensitive intervention for both schools and families.
The following is an examination of the relevant literature on this topic, beginning with the theoretical framework. As the research is an inquiry of cultural similarities and differences, a discussion of understanding social development in a cultural context will be explored. Then the literature on aggression, social withdrawal and shyness will be discussed, including the known trajectories for these problem social skills. Research on parental beliefs about social behavior, including attribution theory and cultural variation, will follow. The final sections of the chapter will examine similar recent studies conducted in other cultures using the same methodology as the current study and a brief description of the Bangladeshi culture.

**Theoretical Framework**

Historically, viewing child development in context has been relatively recent. Not until the 1970’s did the study for development in context become widely accepted (Gauvain, 2001). Researchers in the field began to take a closer look at how to understand and describe development with the child’s social and cultural context in mind, and one such visionary in the field of social development was Urie Bronfenbrenner (Miller, 2002). Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of child development includes five systems of influence ranging from direct and frequent interaction with the child (the microsystem) to the indirect cultural attitudes embedded in the child’s culture (the macrosystem). This overarching cultural ideology is useful for seeing a child in context and understanding the environmental influences that shape development. Bronfenbrenner
presents this concept as a three-dimensional model of concentric circles around the child (Figure 1). For Bronfenbrenner, the “cultural blueprint” of the macrosystem informs and guides the parents of a particular culture, whether consciously or unconsciously, in the strategies of raising their children. (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Miller, 2002).

Figure 1

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological model

Source: Santrock, 2007
In addition, Bronfenbrenner’s theory includes the processes, or mechanisms of development in the environment. These “proximal processes” allow one to see an individual’s traits, in an environmental context, as a developmental mechanism as well as a developmental outcome (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). This allows for development to be analyzed as a more dynamic process of increasingly complex exchanges between the individual—and their biology—and the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Bronfenbrenner’s work represented a significant shift in how to account for social and cultural influence on development.

**Harkness and Super’s Developmental Niche Model**

Influenced by past work of researchers like Bronfenbrenner, Super and Harkness’ (1997) cultural research in both child development and anthropology has led to a comparable concept of a cultural context for understanding child development. For Super and Harkness, a child is situated in an environment, or developmental niche, which is structured by three subsystems (see Figure 2). The first subsystem is the child’s physical and social setting, including the environment that the child lives in and the people that inhabit the setting and interact with the child. The second subsystem includes the cultural childrearing practices and customs that are often deeply held standards of practice. The third subsystem relates to the psychology of the parents and/or caregivers. This system includes what Super and Harkness refer to as parental “ethnotheories,” that is, beliefs about raising children and the goals and strategies parents utilize in childrearing. The developmental niche is an open and fluid system that can be influenced and changed by
what is beyond the niche of the child. Super and Harkness also allow that the child’s
niche is directly influenced by the attributes of the child and can therefore be viewed as
an adaptive and reciprocal process (Super & Harkness, 1997).

Figure 2

This theoretical framework provides an appropriate tool for analyzing the
differences and similarities in the caregiver psychology and customs in the two settings,
Dhaka, Bangladesh and Sacramento, California. Together with contextual developmental
theories like Bronfenbrenner’s, analysis can focus on how a mother’s beliefs influence
the socialization of the child in context rather than as merely a parent-child dyad.
Social skills problems in early childhood, such as withdrawal and aggression, present a multitude of developmental challenges for children. Studies have shown that aggression and withdrawal can lead to other social problems, including peer rejection in childhood. Children who are rejected by their peers face further isolation and less opportunity to improve their social skills (Rubin et al., 1998).

In addition to peer rejection and poor academic performance in childhood, other studies have found links between social skills deficiency and outcomes such as teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease (Serbin, Peters, McAffer & Swartzman, 1991), long-term unemployment (Kokko & Pulkkinen, 2000) and depression (Booth-LaForce & Oxford, 2008), all of which can be in part attributed to poor self-image. As the literature demonstrates, aggression, withdrawal, and shyness in children present a risk for both internalizing and externalizing problems throughout development. The following sections explore the literature on these behaviors in more detail.

**Aggression**

For the purposes of the current study, aggression refers to acts of physical aggression and excludes verbal or relational aggression. Physical aggression can be defined as hostile intentional acts such as hitting, kicking, throwing objects and pushing another in a potentially harmful manner (McEvoy et al., 2003). The focus on physical aggression for this review reflects the methodology in which the hypothetical aggressive
acts are portrayed as physical in nature. Additionally, aggression of this nature is frequently found in early childhood (Campbell, Speiker, Burchinal, Poe & NICHD, 2006), and research indicates that physical aggression is most prevalent in preschool-aged children. Evidence suggests that the preschool years are also when children learn to control aggressive behavior resulting in a much lower instance of aggression in school aged children, with the onset of aggression in elementary school considered atypical (Tremblay et al., 2004). Aggressive children have difficulty maintaining peer relationships and have been shown to experience troubled relationships with their teachers in the primary school years (Ladd & Burgess, 1999). Several studies have further linked peer rejection to poor school performance and delinquency (Rubin et al., 1998).

In a longitudinal study, Tremblay et al. (2004) found that the majority of toddlers aged 17 months behave aggressively towards their peers, siblings and adults and that children who do not learn to control aggression are more likely to have mothers with a background in high risk and antisocial behaviors. These children who behave aggressively in the school years have been shown to be at high risk for violence in the teen years and into adulthood (Tremblay et al., 2004). In examining the trajectory of aggressive children, Campbell et al. (2006), using longitudinal data from the NICHD study, found that toddlers with high levels of stable aggression presented risk factors for social dysfunction in the preteen years. With regard to the stability of aggression, a Dutch longitudinal twin study in 2003 followed twin pairs from age three to 12, and found that aggression stability resulted from both genetic and environmental factors, including
family stressors and parenting (van Beijsterveldt, Bartels, Hudziak & Boomsma). Cross-cultural evidence has been found for children with aggressive behavior and this growing body of evidence suggests that cultural values and socialization differences exist in how aggressive behaviors are responded to (Porter et al., 2005). Similar patterns of aggression are found in samples from Mainland China, South Korea, Italy and Canada (Cheah & Chirkov, 2008; Cheah & Park, 2006; Cheah & Rubin, 2004; Schneider et al., 1997).

Social Withdrawal

Social withdrawal has been defined inconsistently and often misinterpreted. For the purposes of the research reported here, social withdrawal is defined as consistent solitary behavior with both unfamiliar and familiar peers. This differs from shyness in that a shy child is inhibited in new or novel social situations (Burgess et al., 2001). The distinction is therefore found in the consistency and the novelty of the social encounter. Children who are withdrawn struggle socially and academically and have been found to have a negative self-image (Cheah & Rubin, 2004). Research indicates that socially withdrawn children in middle childhood are rejected by their peers at a frequency matching that of aggressive children (Rubin et al., 1998).

Booth-LaForce and Oxford (2008) followed over a thousand students from first through sixth grade, and their results indicated that poor inhibitory control and an inadequate parent-child relationship produced negative outcomes for socially withdrawn preschoolers, including internalizing problems and loneliness. Interestingly, the results of this study also suggest that shy preschoolers who were not reported as rejected by their
peers showed a decrease in social withdrawal over time. Conversely, another study on the stability of withdrawn behavior found that children who exhibited withdrawn behavior at age 4 were more likely to be socially inhibited behavior at age 7 (Rubin, Cheah & Fox, 2001).

A directive parenting style in which direction and guidance is given when it is unnecessary, as in free-play, has been associated with inhibited preschoolers more than non-inhibited children (Burgess et al., 2001). Research on the stability of social withdrawal has yielded inconsistent results; however, consensus has been established that social withdrawal presents a social developmental risk and that environmental factors like parenting behaviors and peer relationships can provide mitigating effects on the trajectory of withdrawal (Booth-LaForce & Oxford, 2008; Burgess et al., 2001; Cheah et al., 1999; Cheah & Rubin, 2004; Rubin et al., 1998). The influences of parenting behaviors and culture on social withdrawal are discussed below.

Shyness

The literature on shyness has been beleaguered by the inconsistent use of the terminology. Although often used interchangeably with the terms social inhibition, social reticence, social withdrawal and social anxiety, shyness is generally considered a temperamental characteristic often describing a child who is socially inhibited in new situations (Rubin & Coplan, 2010, Burgess et al., 2001). Rubin and Coplan (2004) refer to shyness, social withdrawal and inhibition as different types of “solitude,” in which shyness is a subset of social withdrawal (Cheah & Rubin, 2004). Rubin and Coplan
distinguish between shyness and social reticence in that social reticence includes repeated instances of watching but not engaging in the play of others. A preschool aged child who is described as shy is one who, though interested in interacting with peers, experiences feelings of anxiety and does not engage in the activities around them.

Evidence suggests that maternal beliefs and behavior towards a temperamentally shy child can influence the development of social withdrawal. Attentive and sensitive parenting of shy children in the preschool years has been shown to moderate inhibited behavior and child negativity in later childhood, and that insensitive parenting of shy children in early childhood is associated with the development of social withdrawal in middle school (Hane, Cheah, Rubin & Fox, 2008).

In a longitudinal study on shyness and parental perceptions, Rubin, Nelson, Hastings and Asendorpf (1999) found that a parent’s perception of child shyness at age two was predictive of parenting behavior that limited child independence at age four. Additionally, parent-related factors such as maternal depression have been shown to increase the display of inhibition in preschool-aged children. Indeed, research suggests that how parents socialize their children can influence the development of shy and socially withdrawn behavior and parents who are over controlling, overly affectionate or insensitive further inhibit their toddlers behaviors (Burgess et al., 2001). Such research highlights the importance of understanding parent beliefs and how they lead to practices that inhibit or enhance social development.
Parent Beliefs about Social Behavior

As previously noted, parental beliefs are an important part of a child’s developmental niche, and serve as a pathway to the cultural socialization of a child (Super & Harkness, 1997). Whether conscious or unconscious, parents’ beliefs and ideals about how a child should behave influence how a parent responds to their children’s behavior (Cheah & Rubin, 2004). As Cheah and Rubin (2004) explain, “one source of aggressive, shy and withdrawn behaviour may stem from those parenting attitudes, ideas, feelings, and thoughts about these respective phenomena that serve to guide parental behaviour” (p. 83). The accumulative force of parent behavior throughout childhood has been shown to impact children in all areas of development (Cheah & Chirkov, 2008).

Parenting beliefs, parenting behavior, and children’s behavior influence each other (Rubin et al., 1998). Parents’ ideas about the way they should respond to a socially withdrawn, shy or aggressive child affect their strategies for handling social interactions with their children. For example, a parent who believes that aggression or social withdrawal should be handled with sensitive, low-power parenting strategies may treat their socially maladapted child differently than a parent who believes these children should be handled with firm, high-power parenting strategies (Rubin et al., 1998). As Rubin et al. (1998) explain, what a parent believes and how they react affects their child’s development and social behavior, which also then shapes the child’s peer interactions and interpersonal relationships. It is this interplay of influence and behavior between parent and child that underscores the importance of parent beliefs on child outcomes.
Emotional Reactions and Socialization Strategies

The way parents react and the strategies they use to respond to their children’s maladaptive social behavior can reflect their parenting beliefs. Cheah and Rubin (2004) note that parent emotional response and strategies vary depending upon the type of behavior exhibited by their children. Not surprisingly, research indicates that parents react more firmly with children who are aggressive than with children who are withdrawn. Cultural variation has also been found in parents’ beliefs about social development and parenting strategies. Differing cultural values, parenting styles and childhood temperamental characteristics interact as parents meet the challenge of parenting their developing children (Porter et al., 2005).

Socially maladaptive children present a particular challenge to parents who may have a culturally prescribed rigid model of parenting. As Stanley Greenspan (1995) recommends, parents of children with challenging behavior need to adapt their parenting strategies to benefit the social development of their children. Illustrating this point is a consistently developing amount of research on the association between temperament and parenting with regard to social withdrawal. As previously discussed, the literature indicates that mothers’ perceptions about their child’s shyness in early childhood are positively associated with the development of social withdrawal in middle childhood (Hane et al., 2008). In this way the research highlights the power of parental beliefs and perception in the trajectory of their child’s development.

The current study used maternal report of preschool-aged children’s problem social behavior to compare the emotional reactions and parenting strategies of
Bangladeshi and European American mothers. The mothers were asked to rate their emotional reactions and suggest parenting strategies for aggressive, socially withdrawn and shy behaviors depicted in short, hypothetical vignettes.

**Attributions**

Another aspect of parenting beliefs that is thought to affect how parents behave towards their children is that of the attributions parents make of their children’s behavior. According to attribution theory, the reasons parents give for their children’s behavior, and whether these reasons focus on internal or external causes, can influence their parenting behavior. A parent who attributes his/her child’s behavior to external causes has been shown to respond differently than a parent who attributes their child’s behavior to the innate characteristics of their child (Miller, 1995). This is in part due to the belief that an internal attribution, such as the temperament of the child, is perceived as highly stable, whereas an external attribution, such as another child’s behavior or other environmental force, is perceived as instable or easily changed (Cheah & Rubin, 2004). In one study of parent attributions, Dix and Grusec (1985 in Miller, 1995) found that internal attributions for their children’s poor social skills were more disturbing to parents. This is thought to occur because internal attributions reflect poorly on the child and/or the parent’s character whereas an external attribution does not (Miller, 1995). Recent cross-cultural research has attempted to understand how culture influences parent attributions as well as other aspects of parenting beliefs. The research suggests that “Western” cultures, Canada and Italy specifically, attribute children’s negative social skills to internal causes while
“Non-Western” cultures like South Korea and China more often find external causes for the same behavior (Cheah & Chirkov, 2008; Cheah & Park, 2006; Cheah & Rubin, 2004; Schneider et al., 1997). These findings indicate that parents from collectivist cultures tend to believe that problem social behavior are more often a result of the situation or environment in which they occur; parents from individualistic cultures tend to believe that these behaviors are more often the result of the child’s temperament.

In the current study, the Bangladeshi and European American mothers were asked to indicate whether they believed that the instances of aggression, social withdrawal and shyness depicted in the hypothetical vignettes were caused by internal or external factors, what level of stability they would attribute to such behavior, and the intentionality of the child in behaving in such a manner.

**Culture and Parental Beliefs about Children’s Social Development**

According to Super and Harkness (1997), parental beliefs are part of the cultural structure of child development, and an understanding of developmental outcomes can result from studying the cultural environment, or niche, of a child. In addition to shaping a child’s social environment and parental beliefs, culture and customs influence interactions between parents and children which are the second subsystem of the developmental niche.

To this end, recent research on cross-cultural variation has explored how culture influences children’s social development. One component of that influence is parent beliefs. The literature on cross-cultural variation in parenting frequently highlights the
difference between individualistic parenting seen in “Western” countries, such as the United States and Germany, and collectivist parenting in “Non-Western” countries such as China and Japan (Harkness et al., 2000). Such research comparing individualistic societies with those of a collectivist orientation, has attempted to uncover what is considered the most important or fundamental element of variation among cultures (Schneider, 1999). Studying this difference between individualistic and collectivist cultures, the researcher seeks to gain an understanding of the influence these cultural belief systems may exert on parenting behavior and child development (Cheah & Chirkov, 2008; Cheah & Park, 2006; Cheah & Rubin, 2004; Harkness, et al., 2000; Porter et al., 2005; Schneider et al., 1997).

For example, Schneider et al. (1997) explain that parents from a culture that places value on individual accomplishments and bravado would favor behavior that is more extroverted; such parents may be more concerned about a shy or withdrawn child than one who is aggressive. Conversely, parents from a cultural group that favors the good of the group over the needs of the individual may be more concerned about aggressive behavior than shyness or withdrawal. These assumptions have shaped a growing body of cross-cultural research on how parental beliefs about problematic social skills differ and how these beliefs influence developmental outcomes.

The current study expands the existing cultural work in the area of parent beliefs by comparing the emotional reactions, attributions, and strategies of Bangladeshi and European American mothers. In the expansion of cultural study in this area, it is the intention of the researcher to compare parental beliefs about social development in
Bangladesh, a collectivist culture, with those in America, an individualistic culture, and to analyze the data in relation to similar studies done in other cultures.

**Using Vignettes to Study Mothers’ Beliefs about Problem Social Behaviors**

Of the recent cultural studies on parent beliefs, those that expand the work of Mills and Rubin are relevant to the current study. Using hypothetical vignettes describing instances of peer-directed aggression and social withdrawal, Mills and Rubin (1990) asked parents of 4 year-olds to discuss the child’s behavior, describe how they would feel about their child acting that way, and to discuss what strategies they would use to deal with the aggressive or withdrawn behavior. The results indicated that parents most often felt negatively about aggressive behavior and recommended directive parenting strategies; in contrast, the parents most often felt puzzled and recommended nondirective strategies, such as asking about the child’s feelings, for socially withdrawn behavior (Mills & Rubin, 1990). Three such recent studies have used the vignettes developed by Mills and Rubin to investigate parents’ emotional reactions, strategies, and attributions regarding young children’s peer aggression and social withdrawal in different cultures. Across these three studies, parents’ beliefs about a child’s peer-directed aggression and social withdrawal were examined in European American, Italian, Chinese, and South Korean families.
Comparison of Chinese and American Mothers

In the study of Mainland Chinese mothers, Cheah and Rubin (2004) sought to understand how culture relates to (a) mothers’ reactions to problem social behaviors, (b) their attributions of the behavior, (c) how they would choose to react, and (d) their related socialization goals. The participants in the study included European American and Chinese mothers of preschool children. Both groups of mothers were highly educated and resided in large cities. The participants answered questions about four vignettes, with two vignettes describing a child behaving aggressively and two describing a socially withdrawn child. Rating scales were used for the mothers to rate their emotional reactions and attributions for the behaviors described. Then the mothers were asked to respond in an open-ended format to the strategies the mothers would use, as well as a description of their parenting goals for the given scenario.

Both Chinese and European American mothers reported negative emotional responses to the hypothetical instances of social withdrawal and peer-directed aggression. However, the Chinese mothers most frequently reported they would feel angry in response to aggression and anxious in response to withdrawn behavior; in contrast, the European American mothers more frequently reported they would feel puzzled and anxious about withdrawal, but would feel angry, disappointed and embarrassed about aggression. Further, the Chinese mothers attributed children’s socially withdrawn behaviors more often to external causes than did their European American counterparts. Additionally, the Chinese mothers focused on directive and high power strategies and long-term, group-oriented goals in contrast to the European American mothers across the
data, though European American mothers were significantly more likely to report high-power strategies for aggressive behavior than the Chinese mothers.

The findings on aggression supported previous research that such behavior is viewed negatively across many cultures (Cheah & Park, 2006; Cheah & Rubin, 2004). The results of the research on social withdrawal supported previous research on European American mothers’ beliefs and challenged previous research that found that social withdrawal was accepted in the Chinese culture. The researchers speculate that such findings may be due to a distinction between shyness and social withdrawal in which shyness is viewed positively in collectivist cultures; however, withdrawal could be viewed as threatening to the goal of “harmonious group interaction.” Social withdrawal can be viewed as problematic when group interaction and concern for the group are valued. Additionally, the authors note that the Chen 2000 (in Cheah & Rubin, 2004) study that found positive report of shy behaviors in China used peer nominations rather than hypothetical vignettes, and postulated that the difference in the methodology and terminology may account for the discrepancy. The results of the parenting goals in this study seem to reflect the collectivist orientation of the Chinese mothers and the individualist orientation of the European American mothers, in that Chinese mothers responses focused on group and long term goals and European American mothers goals centered on improving the child’s self-esteem (Cheah & Rubin, 2004).
Study of South Korean Mothers

Using the same methodology, Cheah and Park (2006) studied South Korean mothers in Seoul, South Korea with at least one preschool aged child. As in the previous study, the majority of the mothers were highly educated and from an urban setting. Additionally, as with the previous study in China, South Korean mothers reported negative emotional reactions to the aggression and withdrawal behaviors in the vignettes, with anger the most common reaction to aggression and puzzlement the most reported reaction to social withdrawal. South Korean mothers reported external attributions for aggression; however, in contrast to what was found for Chinese mothers in the 2004 study, these mothers attributed withdrawal more frequently to internal causes. Also in the South Korean study, mothers reported high-power and directive strategies for aggression and low-power and indirect strategies for withdrawal. South Korean mothers’ goals highlighted parent and social-centered goals for aggressive behavior and child-centered goals for withdrawn behavior. The authors explain this difference in goal orientation as reflecting a cultural shift that is taking place in South Korea due to Western influence (Cheah & Park, 2006). When compared to the Chinese data, the South Korean mothers do appear to fall somewhere between the individualistic and collectivist goal orientation.

Comparison of Italian and Canadian mothers

In Schneider et al.’s (1997) comparison of Italian and Canadian mothers parenting beliefs, the methodology was slightly different. Schneider et al. used Mills and Rubin’s vignettes, however, mothers of older children (mean age = 7 years) were assessed and
peer nomination instruments were utilized. Additionally, the authors examined whether mothers of boys responded differently than mothers of girls in the two cultures. The majority of both sets of participants were from middle to upper-class, urban families. Although the methodology and age of the children was slightly different from the above mentioned studies, the results closely matched those of the European American mothers, in that internal attributions and high power parenting strategies were recorded for aggressive behavior and low power strategies were suggested for withdrawn behavior. The English-Canadian mothers recorded stronger emotional reactions to both types of behaviors than did the Italian mothers; also, gender differences were found in the Italian data, in that Italian mothers of girls were less emotionally reactive to social withdrawal of girls than boys (Schneider et al., 1997). The data in this study appear to reflect an individualistic orientation in this culture in which gender may exert a stronger role in influencing parenting behavior than the other cultures studied.

**Summary of the Cross-Cultural Data**

In summary, the findings indicate that emotional responses and parenting strategies for the two types of behaviors were similar across cultures while attributions and socialization goals varied. More specifically, parents in all four cultures reported negative emotional responses to both the aggression and withdrawal vignettes and more often reported the need for high power strategies with aggressive children and low power strategies for withdrawn children. While Italian and European American parents reported internal attributions more often for both aggression and withdrawal, South Korean and
Chinese mothers more frequently reported external attributions. The goals of the mothers from the collectivist cultures of China and South Korea reflected more group oriented or social centered goals, with the South Korean mothers reporting more child centered goals for withdrawal. The European American mothers’ goals, on the other hand, more frequently centered on the immediate needs of the child, reflecting an individualistic orientation (Cheah & Park, 2006; Cheah & Rubin, 2004; Schneider et al., 1997). In the current study, it is hypothesized that the Bangladeshi mothers’ reports will more closely match the beliefs of the other Asian cultures studied than the reported European American mothers’ beliefs.

**Bangladeshi Culture**

For the current study, Bangladeshi and European American mothers’ responses to the vignettes were compared. Bangladesh is a developing South Asian country that faces many environmental, economic and social challenges. Bangladesh ranks among the most densely populated nations in the world, with 878 people per square kilometer (Huq & Tasnim, 2007). The literacy for people over 15 is 48%, with women’s literacy 13% below that of the male population (Huq & Tasnim, 2007). According to UNICEF, 41% of the population lives on less than one US dollar a day. Nineteen percent of children aged five to fourteen in Bangladesh are part of the countries’ labor force, most often in agricultural and service oriented jobs in rural areas (Khanam, 2005). Education for children is compulsory and government sponsored for children ages six to ten (Nath & Chowdhury, 2002), with preschool education only recently becoming more popular with families of
high socioeconomic status. The cultural and religious practices of Bangladesh can be linked with those of Pakistan, of which it was part of before becoming an independent nation in 1971.

Bangladesh was chosen for the current study as a counterpoint to previous research on parental beliefs. No published literature could be found on a developing country using the Mills and Rubin methodology. Although Bangladesh is a culturally homogenous Asian country considered to be collectivist in orientation, it is also influenced by individualistic ideals through the media and growth of Western-style private schools (Chowdhury, 1995). Analyzing the Bangladeshi data in relation to the previous studies, and through the framework provided by Super and Harkness (1997), may indicate important differences in parental beliefs in comparison to mothers in China and South Korea, that could result in differences in how children are being socialized. Furthermore, the addition of two shyness vignettes differentiates the current work from the previous in this area and attempts to detect differing parental beliefs reported for shyness and social withdrawal.
Chapter 3

METHODS

Research Question

For the current study, Bangladeshi and European American mothers were compared on their emotional response, attributions, strategies and goals regarding hypothetical instances of young children’s social withdrawal, shyness and aggression. The study pursued three questions about Bangladeshi and European American mothers. First, do the two groups of mothers report different emotional reactions when presented with vignettes of aggressive, withdrawn or shy behaviors? Second, do they differ in attributing the behaviors to internal versus external causes? Third, do the two groups differ in the strategies they recommend for such behavior?

Research Design

The research design for the present study was based on the Cheah and Rubin (2004) study comparing mothers in Mainland China and the United States. In addition to the aggression and social withdrawal behaviors targeted in their research, vignettes of shyness where added to the current study at the suggestion of Cheah and Rubin. Hypothetical vignettes depicting aggression, social withdrawal, and shyness were used to
capture parents’ beliefs, as previous research indicates that cultural variation has been detected using this method (Cheah & Chirkov, 2008; Cheah & Park, 2006; Cheah & Rubin, 2004; Schneider et al., 1997). Bangladeshi and European American mothers’ responses on rating scales and open-ended questions were compared, using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical procedures.

Participants

Twenty-three Bangladeshi mothers (aged 27 to 40 years, \( M = 34 \) years) of at least one preschool-aged child participated in the study. The mothers resided in urban areas of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, is a city of over 15 million people. The Bangladeshi mothers were recruited in Dhaka, Bangladesh by the researcher’s sister-in-law; participating mothers were part of her large network of extended family and friends. Twenty-seven American mothers (aged 27 to 50 years, \( M = 36.5 \) years) of European decent also participated. The mothers lived primarily in urban areas of Sacramento, California and were recruited at two preschools and through associates of the researcher in Sacramento.

The European American (EA) mothers were significantly older than the Bangladeshi (B) mothers, \( M_{EA} = 36.5 \) years, \( M_B = 34 \) years, \( F(1,48) = 5.19, p < .05 \). However the average age of their preschool aged child was not significantly different \( (M_{EA} = 3.5 \) years, \( M_B = 3.4 \) years). Family size was different in the two cultural groups, averaging 1.4 children for Bangladeshi mothers and 2.0 children for the European
American mothers. Of the 23 Bangladeshi mothers, 13 mothers had one child and 10 mothers had two children for a total of 13 boys and 17 girls. In contrast, there was more variation in family size in the European American group. Of the 27 European American mothers, 16 mothers had two children, seven mothers had one child, two mothers had three children, one mother had four and one mother had five children, totaling 26 boys and 28 girls. For those mothers who had more than one child in the target age range (2 – 5 years), extra children were removed from the data to focus on one focal child per mother. To preserve the child gender ratio, children were removed by alternating genders.

Bangladeshi and European American mothers had comparable education levels. For Bangladeshi mothers, 61% had master’s degrees or higher, 30 % had bachelor’s degrees and 9% had some college education. For American mothers, 52% had master’s degrees or higher, 26% had bachelor’s degrees, and 22% had some college education. More Bangladeshi mothers (78%) than European American mothers (56%) worked outside the home, reporting professional occupations such as banking and teaching. European American mothers who worked outside the home also reported professional occupations such as teaching and counseling.

Religious affiliation represented the largest difference between the two groups, in that 91% of the Bangladeshi mothers reported Islam as their religion and 0% of the European American mothers did so. The other 9% of Bangladeshi mothers were Christian or declined to state a religious affiliation. The majority of the European American mothers reported no religious affiliation (30%), followed by Christianity (22%), Catholicism (19%) and miscellaneous other religious affiliations (29%).
Procedure

The English forms and questionnaires were sent to the researcher’s multilingual Bangladeshi sister-in-law for translation into Bengali prior to travel to Bangladesh. Fluent in both English and Bengali, the researcher’s sister-in-law was able to translate the materials in their entirety.

The researcher traveled to Dhaka, Bangladesh to organize the Bangladeshi data collection. Over a two week period, the researcher’s sister-in-law distributed packets containing the anonymous consent form, the Bangladeshi demographic survey and the Maternal Proactive Beliefs Questionnaire to friends and acquaintances. The packets were prepared in duplicate in both languages so that Bangladeshi participants had the option to complete the packets in English or Bengali. All participants chose to complete the English versions of the surveys, with some completing the packet immediately and others completing it at a later date. The completed packets were returned to the researcher’s Bangladeshi sister-in-law at her mother’s home without names to protect the anonymity of the participants. The researcher was not present for the distribution or collection of the materials.

For the American sample, the researcher delivered packets containing the anonymous consent form, American demographic survey and the Maternal Proactive Beliefs Questionnaire to two Sacramento, California preschool teachers to distribute and
collect once completed. The packets were later retrieved upon completion without names to protect the anonymity of the participants. Additionally, the researcher distributed the materials to associates that distributed them to their acquaintances in Sacramento, California. The materials were returned to the third parties, then delivered to the researcher at a later date.

**Measures**

A demographic survey was used to obtain brief background information on the mothers (see Appendix A & B). The demographic survey inquired about the participants’ age, educational level, occupation, children’s ages and genders and religious affiliation. The demographic survey for the American sample also included an additional question on ethnicity to determine if the mothers were of European decent. The demographic survey for the Bangladeshi mothers adjusted the categories for educational level to reflect the accurate education levels for those living in Dhaka. On the American demographic survey, the categories for education included elementary school, junior high school and high school; the Bangladeshi demographic survey equivalents included primary school (equivalent to grades 1-8) and secondary school (equivalent to grades 9-12).

The *Maternal Proactive Beliefs Questionnaire* was adapted from the work of Mills and Rubin (1990) and included six hypothetical vignettes depicting two instances of peer-directed aggression, two instances of social withdrawal and two instances of shyness. In the aggression vignettes, the mother observes her child fighting over toys and
being physical with others. In the social withdrawal vignettes, a mother observes her child playing alone in social settings. In addition, two hypothetical vignettes illustrating shyness were included. In the first shyness vignette developed by Coplan et al. (2002), a mother observes her child watching other children play while displaying reticent behavior—chin down and back against a wall. The second shyness vignette was created by the researcher and involved a child clinging to the mother’s leg and not replying to others when spoken to at a birthday party. The shyness vignettes were added at the suggestion of Cheah and Rubin to capture any difference in the responses of mothers for social withdrawal versus shyness (see Appendix C).

The Maternal Proactive Beliefs Questionnaire (see Appendix D) measures mothers’ emotional response, attributions for the behavior (i.e. cause, stability and intention), and parenting strategies as related to the behavior in each vignette, either by rating scale or an open-ended question format. The rating scale for emotional response for angry, anxious, disappointed, disgusted, embarrassed, hurt, guilty, and puzzled ranged from 1 to 5 (1 = not at all; 5 = extremely). For the three measures of attribution, the scale ranged from 1 to 5 for disposition (1 = completely due to child’s nature or personality; 5 = completely due to situation); stability (1 = definitely a temporary stage; 5 = definitely will act this way in the future); and intention (1 = the child acted this way on purpose; 5 = the child definitely did not do this on purpose). Mothers rated the causes, stability and intentionality of young children’s aggression, social withdrawal and shyness on a 5-point scale, rating them for two vignettes per social behavior. In each of the three attribution categories, ratings for the two vignettes were added together to make scores
for each social behavior that ranged from 2 to 10. Lower scores on the locus of cause scales indicated internal cause (disposition), and higher scores indicated external cause (situation).

Open-ended questions asked what a mother should do about the behavior (Cheah & Rubin, 2004). Although mothers’ beliefs about parenting goals were measured with this questionnaire, they were not included for analysis in the present study.

**Coding**

Mothers’ written answers to the open-ended questions about strategies were coded using Mills and Rubin’s 15 coding categories for socialization strategies. The 15 categories are: (1) forcing appropriate behavior; (2) punishment; (3) threat; (4) suggestions; (5) directiveness; (6) resolve; (7) other-oriented reasoning; (8) self-oriented reasoning; (9) normative statements; (10) discussion; (11) emotional appeal; (12) seek explanation from child; (13) provide opportunity; (14) modeling; (15) education. An additional category was added for (16) other responses. Each statement was coded using the definitions provided by Cheah and Rubin (2004) and multiple codes were given if more than one category was identified in a single response (see Appendix E).
Chapter 4

RESULTS

The results of the survey data are reported in the following three sections: mothers’ emotional reactions, mothers’ causal attributions, and socialization strategies. First, both groups of mothers’ emotional reactions to the social behaviors are discussed. Second, Bangladeshi and European American mothers’ causal attributions for aggression, social withdrawal and shyness are compared. Finally, the socialization strategies suggested by the Bangladeshi and European American mothers are reported.

Mothers’ Emotional Reactions

The first research question concerned differences in the two groups’ emotional reactions to the vignettes. The mothers rated eight different emotional reactions to the three kinds of social behaviors on a 5-point scale, with higher scores indicating a more intense reaction. Mothers rated their emotional reactions for two vignettes per social behavior, and each of the emotion ratings for the two vignettes were summed to create scores for each social behavior, ranging from 2 to 10. Because of overall low ratings, the emotions disgusted and hurt, were removed from further analysis. The remaining emotional reactions analyzed included angry, anxious, disappointed, embarrassed, and puzzled. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the mother’s emotional reactions for aggression, social withdrawal and shyness. A series of 2 x 3 mixed
ANOVAs were conducted on the five emotional reaction scores. Cultural Group (Bangladeshi, American) was the between subjects variable and Behavior Type (aggression, withdrawal and shyness) was the within subjects variable.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for mothers’ ratings of emotional reactions to aggression, social withdrawal and shyness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bangladeshi M (SD)</th>
<th>European American M (SD)</th>
<th>Total M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aggression stories</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>6.17 (2.33)</td>
<td>5.11 (1.48)</td>
<td>5.60 (1.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>6.17 (2.33)</td>
<td>5.11 (1.48)</td>
<td>5.60 (1.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>5.22 (1.91)</td>
<td>6.22 (1.99)</td>
<td>5.76 (2.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassed</td>
<td>6.74 (2.32)</td>
<td>5.93 (1.94)</td>
<td>6.30 (2.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puzzled</td>
<td>4.70 (1.89)</td>
<td>4.67 (2.22)</td>
<td>4.68 (2.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.80 (2.16)</td>
<td>5.41 (1.82)</td>
<td>5.59 (2.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social withdrawal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>2.61 (1.34)</td>
<td>2.19 (0.48)</td>
<td>2.38 (0.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>6.13 (2.22)</td>
<td>4.81 (2.02)</td>
<td>5.42 (2.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>3.83 (1.78)</td>
<td>4.00 (1.86)</td>
<td>3.92 (1.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassed</td>
<td>3.70 (2.42)</td>
<td>2.89 (1.53)</td>
<td>3.26 (2.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puzzled</td>
<td>4.78 (2.37)</td>
<td>5.74 (2.14)</td>
<td>5.30 (2.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.21 (2.03)</td>
<td>3.93 (1.61)</td>
<td>4.06 (1.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shyness stories</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>2.61 (1.41)</td>
<td>2.44 (0.93)</td>
<td>2.52 (1.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>5.43 (2.79)</td>
<td>4.52 (1.83)</td>
<td>4.94 (2.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>4.04 (2.36)</td>
<td>3.85 (1.68)</td>
<td>3.94 (2.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassed</td>
<td>3.87 (1.89)</td>
<td>3.52 (1.58)</td>
<td>3.68 (1.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puzzled</td>
<td>4.83 (2.39)</td>
<td>5.74 (2.21)</td>
<td>5.32 (2.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.16 (2.17)</td>
<td>4.01 (1.65)</td>
<td>4.08 (1.91)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of anger scores showed a significant main effect of Behavior Type, $F(1, 48) = 126.07, p < .0001$. Post hoc analysis with paired t-tests indicated that, overall,
anger scores were significantly higher for aggression than for social withdrawal, \( t(49) = 11.86, p < .0001 \), and shyness, \( t(49) = 10.95, p < .0001 \). Results also indicated a non-significant trend for cultural difference, with Bangladeshi mothers reporting higher anger scores across the three social behaviors than American mothers did, \( F(1,48) = 3.5, p < .07 \).

Analysis of anxious ratings indicated a significant effect of culture, with Bangladeshi mothers reporting higher anxious scores overall, than American mothers did, \( F(1, 48) = 5.89, p < .02 \). Scores for anxious emotional reactions also showed a non-significant trend for Behavior Type, \( F(1, 48) = 3.66, p < .06 \). Post hoc analysis with paired t-tests suggested that anxiousness scores were lower for shyness than for aggression \( t(49) = 1.92, p < .06 \).

Analysis of disappointed ratings indicated a significant main effect for Behavior Type, \( F(1,48) = 35.39, p < .0001 \). Post hoc analysis with paired t-tests indicated that disappointment scores for aggression were higher than for social withdrawal \( t(49) = 6.74, p < .0001 \), and shyness \( t(49) = 5.95, p < .0001 \). There was also a significant Behavior Type x Culture Group interaction, \( F(1, 48) = 4.03, p < .05 \). Post hoc analysis indicated a non-significant trend for American mothers reporting more disappointment for the aggressive behavior than Bangladeshi mothers did, \( F(1,48) = 3.30, p < .08 \).

Analysis of embarrassment ratings indicated a significant main affect for Behavior Type, \( F(1,48) = 85.96, p < .0001 \). Post hoc analysis with paired t-tests indicated that embarrassment scores for aggression were significantly higher than those for
withdrawal $t(49) = 10.54, p < .0001$, and shyness $t(49) = 9.27, p < .0001$. No other main effect or interaction was significant.

Finally, data analysis for puzzled scores resulted in a non-significant trend for the main effect of Behavior Type, $F(1,48) = 2.84, p < .10$. Post hoc analysis suggested that puzzled scores were higher for aggression than for withdrawal $t(49) = -1.73, p < .09$, and shyness $t(49) = -1.78, p < .08$.

**Mothers’ Causal Attributions**

The second research question asked whether mothers attributed the behavior to internal or external causes. Mothers rated their causal attributions for each of the vignettes on a 5-point scale, for two vignettes per social behavior. The ratings for the two vignettes were summed to create total scores for each social behavior, ranging from 2 to 10. The means and standard deviations for the mothers’ causal attributions for the three kinds of social behaviors are reported in Table 2. A series of mixed ANOVA analyses were conducted to test for significant differences in these attribution scores.

**Locus of Cause Attributions**

Lower scores on the locus of cause scales indicated internal cause (disposition), and higher scores indicated external cause (situation). A 2 x 3 mixed ANOVA was performed on mothers’ locus of cause scores, with Cultural Group (Bangladeshi, American) as the between subjects variable and Behavior Type (aggression, withdrawal
and shyness) as the within subjects variable. Results indicated a significant main effect of Behavior Type, $F(1, 48) = 12.68, p < .001$. Post hoc analysis with paired t-tests revealed that both Bangladeshi and American mothers had higher locus of cause scores for aggression than for withdrawal, $t(49) = 2.84, p < .006$, and shyness, $t(49) = 3.38, p < .001$. Thus, both groups of mothers were more likely to attribute young children’s aggression to situational causes than for the other two social behaviors. No other significant main effect or interaction was found for *locus of causal* attributions.

### Table 2

*Descriptive statistics for Bangladeshi and European American mothers’ causal attributions for locus of cause, stability and intention*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bangladeshi</th>
<th>European American</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M(SD)</td>
<td>M(SD)</td>
<td>M(SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression stories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of cause</td>
<td>7.00 (2.36)</td>
<td>6.04 (1.16)</td>
<td>6.48 (1.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>4.61 (1.56)</td>
<td>4.19 (1.33)</td>
<td>4.38 (1.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention</td>
<td>6.09 (2.71)</td>
<td>5.59 (1.53)</td>
<td>5.82 (2.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.90 (2.21)</td>
<td>5.27 (1.34)</td>
<td>5.56 (1.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social withdrawal stories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of cause</td>
<td>5.96 (3.11)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.19)</td>
<td>5.46 (2.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>5.17 (2.46)</td>
<td>5.74 (0.86)</td>
<td>5.48 (1.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention</td>
<td>6.26 (2.70)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.37)</td>
<td>5.60 (2.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.80 (2.76)</td>
<td>5.27 (1.14)</td>
<td>5.51 (2.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shyness stories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of cause</td>
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<td>5.33 (1.47)</td>
<td>5.20 (2.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>5.22 (2.70)</td>
<td>5.44 (1.05)</td>
<td>5.34 (1.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention</td>
<td>6.17 (2.33)</td>
<td>5.11 (1.48)</td>
<td>5.60 (1.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.48 (2.59)</td>
<td>5.29 (1.33)</td>
<td>5.38 (2.02)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stability Attributions

Lower scores on the *stability* scale indicated that the social behavior was due to a temporary stage, and higher scores indicated that the child would likely act this way again in the future. A 2 x 3 mixed ANOVA was performed on mothers’ *stability* attributions, with Cultural Group (Bangladeshi, American) as the between subjects variable and Behavior Type (aggression, withdrawal and shyness) as the within subjects variable. Results showed a significant main effect for Behavior Type, $F(1, 48) = 7.98$, $p < .007$. Post hoc analysis with paired t-tests indicated that across the two groups of mothers, *stability* attribution scores were significantly lower for aggression than for social withdrawal, $t(49) = -4.12$, $p < .0001$, and shyness, $t(49) = 2.91$, $p < .005$. These findings suggest that both Bangladeshi and American mothers consider young children’s aggression as more temporary than instances of social withdrawal and shyness. No other main effect or interaction was significant for *stability* attributions.

Intention Attributions

Lower scores on the *intention* scale indicated that the child acted this way intentionally, and higher scores indicated that the child did not act this way intentionally. A 2 x 3 mixed ANOVA was performed on mothers’ attributions for *intention* of social behavior. Results indicated a significant main effect of Culture, $F(1,48) = 3.92$, $p < .05$, with Bangladeshi mothers having higher *intention* scores overall compared to American mothers. In other words, Bangladeshi mothers were more likely than American mothers
to rate the three social behaviors as unintentional. There was no other main effect or interaction for intention attributions.

**Socialization Strategies**

In this section, descriptive data are presented on Bangladeshi and European American mothers’ reported socialization strategies. Mothers’ written responses to open-ended questions about socialization strategies were coded for the following categories: (1) forcing appropriate behavior; (2) punishment; (3) threat; (4) suggestions; (5) directiveness; (6) resolve; (7) other-oriented reasoning; (8) self-oriented reasoning; (9) normative statements; (10) discussion; (11) emotional appeal; (12) seek explanation from child; (13) provide opportunity; (14) modeling; (15) education; (16) other. Initial analysis revealed little report for threat, suggestions, resolve, other-oriented reasoning, self-oriented reasoning, normative statements, and emotional appeal; therefore, these categories were removed from further analysis.

Some of the above categories were collapsed into the following two groupings: (a) high power (forcing appropriate behavior and punishment) and (b) teaching (discussion, modeling and education). The subsequent categories for parenting strategies were: high power, teaching, seek explanation from the child, provide opportunity, directiveness and other. With the exception of the addition of other, these categories are based on Cheah’s cross-cultural work (Cheah & Chirok, 2008; Cheah & Park, 2006; Cheah & Rubin, 2004). The other category was added due to the number of strategies
suggested by the mothers in both cultures that could not be coded with the existing 15 categories, and included seeking professional help, asking information from someone other than the child, doing nothing about the behavior, and spending more time with the child.

The percentages reported below represent the proportion of the six strategy types to the total number of strategies given per cultural group for each behavior type. The Bangladeshi and European American mothers’ proportional use of the six categories are compared for aggression, social withdrawal, and shyness scenarios.

**Socialization Strategies for Aggression**

For the two aggression stories, the 23 Bangladeshi mothers combined, wrote a total of 39 strategy responses and the 27 European American mothers combined, wrote a total of 104 strategy responses. European American mothers’ larger set of strategy responses suggested that individual mothers were more likely to give multiple strategies for aggression than were individual Bangladeshi mothers ($M_{EA} = 3.5$ strategies, $M_{B} = 1.7$ strategies). Of those totals, both Bangladeshi and European American mothers most often mentioned *teaching* strategies (69% for Bangladeshi mothers, 44% for European American mothers). Additionally, Bangladeshi mothers also recommended *high power* (13%), *provide opportunity* (8%), *other* (8%) and *directiveness* (3%) strategies. European American mothers also recommended *high power* (28%), *directiveness* (13%), *other* (12%), *provide opportunity* (2%), and *seek explanation from the child* (2%). For Bangladeshi mothers, the *other* category for aggressive behavior represented spending
more time with her child; for the European American mothers, the *other* category for aggression included seeking information from others.

Overall, the distribution of strategies for aggression was similar for Bangladeshi and European American mothers. *Teaching* strategies for aggressive behavior represented the largest proportion, which included modeling the appropriate behavior, and educating and/or training the child in the appropriate behavior. One Bangladeshi mother suggested, “teach the child the importance of sharing and blending with different people.” However, their reports of high power strategies suggested a cross-cultural difference. Specifically, the proportion of high power strategies in the European American set of strategies for anger was twice as large as that of the Bangladeshi set of strategies. *High power* strategies included forcing appropriate behavior and punishment. As one European American mother suggested, “Explain why the behavior is not okay and give a time-out or take a toy away for a day or until behavior improves.”

**Socialization Strategies for Social Withdrawal and Shyness**

Bangladeshi mothers, overall, listed 43 strategy responses for social withdrawal, and European American mothers listed 79 strategy responses ($M_B = 1.9$ strategies, $M_{EA} = 2.9$ strategies). Neither Bangladeshi nor European American mothers recommended *high power* strategies for this behavior. The most frequently mentioned strategies for social withdrawal in the Bangladeshi sample were *teaching* (28%), *provide opportunity* (28%) and *other* (28%). One Bangladeshi mother wrote, “Socially engage the child with others of his/her age so that the child gets over with the introvertedness over time.” For
Bangladeshi mothers, the *other* category included seeking professional help, suggesting mothers spend more time with their children, or seeking an explanation from the teacher or another parent. Another strategy in the Bangladeshi set of strategies was *seek explanation from the child* (16%).

In contrast, of the 79 total strategy responses given for social withdrawal in the European American sample, *teaching* (35%) and *seek explanation from the child* (27%) accounted for the highest proportions of responses. One European American mother wrote, “Play with the child around the friends too. Parent can model how to play with others/friends.” European American mothers also recommended *providing opportunity* (18%), *other* (14%) and *directiveness* (6%) for social withdrawal socialization strategies. For the European American mothers, the *other* category for social withdrawal referred to doing nothing about the behavior or seeking an explanation from the teacher or available parent.

With regard to the shyness stories, the Bangladeshi mothers wrote a total of 38 socialization strategy responses that were similar to those recorded for the social withdrawal vignettes ($M = 1.7$ strategies). The largest proportion of these strategy responses were *other* strategies (37%). In addition, Bangladeshi mothers suggested *teaching* (24%), *providing opportunity* (21%) and *seek explanation from the child* (18%). As with the social withdrawal vignettes, Bangladeshi mothers’ *other* strategies for shyness included seeking professional help, suggesting mothers spend more time with their children, or seek an explanation from the teacher or parent. As one Bangladeshi mother wrote, a mother should “spend more time with the child, let him open up more.”
Of the 85 total strategy responses given for shyness in the European American sample ($M = 3.1$ strategies), *teaching* strategies (44%) accounted for the largest proportion. A European American mother commented, “The mother should talk to the child about it, maybe with role-playing. She could introduce stories and occasional television shows about brave and shy kids. Sesame Street is very good for that. She could take him out for varied low-key experiences such as errands, little fun excursions to quiet places, neighborhood walks, etc. and talk about some of the people they notice.”

European American mother also suggested *seeking an explanation from the child* (19%), *directiveness* (14%), *other* (11%), *provide opportunity* (11%) and *high power* (2%) strategies for shyness behaviors. For the European American mothers, the *other* category for shyness referred to doing nothing about the behavior or seeking an explanation from a teacher or another parent.

In general, socialization strategy responses were similar for social withdrawal and shyness for Bangladeshi and European American mothers. *Teaching* strategy responses that included discussion, modeling and education represented a large proportion of strategy responses, and *high power* strategy responses represented the lowest proportion for both social withdrawal and shyness.
Chapter 5
DISCUSSION

Analyzing cross-cultural differences in parenting beliefs can broaden our understanding of one way in which parents influence the social development and peer relationships of their children (Cheah & Rubin, 2004). The purpose of this study was to expand the research on parenting beliefs about the social behaviors of young children to include the Bangladeshi culture. The research was conducted using six hypothetical vignettes depicting two instances of peer-directed aggression, two instances of social withdrawal and two instances of shyness; and Bangladeshi and European American mothers’ causal attributions, emotional reactions, and socialization strategies for each behavior were compared.

Bangladesh is a South Asian country not widely studied in child development research and it potentially provides a counterpoint to the research previously conducted on parenting beliefs. Bangladesh is considered a collectivist country like other Asian countries, but it is distinguished by its developing nation status and the predominance of Islam. Strong familial ties and a group orientation combine with Islamic practices to create a developmental niche for Bangladeshi children that may be quite different from neighboring cultures. Thus, the present study explored Bangladeshi mothers’ beliefs about aggression, social withdrawal and shyness in this interesting cultural context.

The results indicate both significant findings related to the three social behaviors as well as between the two cultures, Bangladeshi and European American. Additionally,
similarities and differences to the recent published research using this methodology were uncovered. As in the previously mentioned studies in China, South Korea, Canada and Italy, mothers in both Bangladesh and the U.S. responded to aggression stories in very different ways than they responded to social withdrawal and shyness (Cheah & Park, 2006; Cheah & Rubin, 2004; Schneider et al, 1997). These vignettes also resulted in very different socialization strategies recommended by both Bangladeshi and European American mothers for aggression. The results for the social withdrawal and shyness vignettes indicated little difference in the mothers’ responses across the two cultures. Both between and within culture differences and similarities are discussed in detail and with respect to past findings.

**Mothers’ Emotional Reactions**

The reported emotional reactions examined were angry, anxious, disappointed, embarrassed, and puzzled. Significant cultural differences were found for some reported emotional reactions to the three problem social behaviors. Bangladeshi mothers were more likely to report higher ratings of anxiousness for all three social behaviors than European American mothers were. The possible reasons for higher ratings of anxiousness for Bangladeshi mothers is unclear, though problematic social behavior can be interpreted as threatening group harmony and therefore be cause for anxiety in collectivist groups (Cheah & Rubin, 2004).
In addition to the significant cultural difference for emotional reactions, non-significant cultural trends were found for anger and disappointment reactions. Bangladeshi mothers reported higher anger scores than European American mothers across all three behavior types, and their anger scores for aggression were more than double their social withdrawal and shyness reactions. Also, a trend was found for difference in culture, in that European American mothers tended to rate higher disappointment for aggression stories than Bangladeshi mothers.

Both Bangladeshi and European American mothers reported significantly higher feelings of anger, disappointment and embarrassment for aggression stories than social withdrawal and shyness stories. Similarly, South Korean mothers in the Cheah and Park (2006) study reported feeling more angry, disgusted and embarrassed by aggression than social withdrawal, and Chinese mothers in the Cheah and Rubin (2004) study rated higher levels of anger and embarrassment for aggression than withdrawal stories. Non-significant trends were also found in the current study for higher ratings for embarrassment and puzzlement for aggression than social withdrawal and shyness in both cultures.

**Causal Attributions**

Causal attributions measured the degree to which the mothers’ attributed each behavior to the disposition of the child or environment, the perceived stability of the behavior, and the mothers’ beliefs about the intentionality of the behavior. Significant
cultural differences were found just for intention attributions, in that Bangladeshi mothers rated intentionality higher across social behaviors more often than European American mothers did. Comparing this finding to previous cross-cultural research using the vignette methodology, the reported intentionality by both South Korean and Chinese mothers were also high, indicating that aggression and withdrawn behaviors were less intentional than that reported by the American mothers (Cheah & Park, 2006; Cheah & Rubin, 2004).

Overall, mothers’ attributions depended on the social behavior. Both Bangladeshi and European American mothers rated significantly higher external causes for aggression stories than social withdrawal and shyness stories. Past research has linked an orientation to attribute behavior to external causes rather than internal traits with collectivist cultures (Cheah & Rubin, 2004); but the current results did not find a cultural difference for this attribution. Additional future research may be needed to uncover the differences in cultural beliefs about locus of cause in the current study.

Bangladeshi and European American mothers also both attributed significantly less stability to aggression than social withdrawal and shyness behaviors, indicating that mothers in both cultures believe that aggression is a more temporary or changeable stage in children’s early years and that social withdrawal and shyness may represent longer lasting or unchangeable behaviors. Perhaps with a larger sample size, cultural differences in stability would be found between Bangladeshi and European American mothers. In prior research, Chinese and South Korean mothers were more likely to believe aggressive behavior was less stable than social withdrawal, compared to European American
mothers (Cheah & Park, 2006; Cheah & Rubin, 2004). In contrast, Italian mothers were found to attribute the behaviors to stable and internal causes and Canadian mothers were more often found to believe social withdrawal was less stable and easily changed (Schneider et al., 1997). Further investigation into the differences in Italian, Canadian and European American mothers attributions may uncover important differences in these individualistic cultures.

**Parenting Socialization Strategies**

The entire set of written socialization strategy responses for the Bangladeshi sample was compared to that of the European American sample. Bangladeshi mothers recorded less than half the total strategy responses of the European American mothers. With regard to parenting strategies, European American mothers were twice as likely to suggest the high power strategies (forcing appropriate behavior and punishment) than Bangladeshi mothers for aggressive behavior. European American mothers expressed the desire to use strategies such as time-outs or forcing the child to give the stolen toy back.

Both Bangladeshi and European American mothers’ largest proportion of strategy responses were teaching strategies that included discussion, modeling appropriate behavior and education for aggression. Many of the mothers in both cultures recorded written strategy responses explaining the importance of sharing with others. The Chinese and South Korean mothers in previous studies also recorded the highest proportion of strategy responses for teaching strategies for aggressive behavior (Cheah & Park, 2006;
Cheah & Rubin, 2004). Although high power strategies were also a large proportion of the strategy responses across cultures for aggression, mothers in Bangladesh and the United States in the present study, and China and South Korea in past studies, most often responded that teaching a preschool-aged child proper social skills was the most effective way to deal with aggressive behavior (Cheah & Park, 2006; Cheah & Rubin, 2004).

Mothers’ distribution of suggested socialization strategies did not differ for social withdrawal and shyness behaviors. As with the ratings for emotional reactions and causal attributions, these data indicate that, for both Bangladeshi and European American mothers in this study, little distinction was made between social withdrawal and shyness. This calls into question Cheah and Rubin’s (2004) assertion that shyness, not social withdrawal, may be positively perceived in collectivist cultures. Interestingly, the set of Bangladeshi strategy responses for social withdrawal and shyness included strategies not mentioned at all by European American mothers; specifically, seeking professional help for the child and spending more one-on-one time with the child. For the European American mothers, strategies also categorized as “other” included doing nothing about the behavior and seeking information from someone other than the child (i.e. a teacher or another adult present). These differences in strategies may represent important cultural differences and suggest topics of future research.

For social withdrawal, some Bangladeshi mothers also suggested strategies involving providing opportunities and teaching the child. These mothers recorded strategy responses such as increasing playtime with other children and expressing the importance of getting along with others. Provision of opportunity also represented a large
proportion of the strategy responses of European American mothers; however, teaching strategies including modeling and education were the largest proportion of the strategy responses for American mothers for this behavior. Some European American mothers suggested playing alongside the children in a social situation to model appropriate behavior for a socially withdrawn child. Cheah and Rubin (2004) suggest that this type of strategy recommendation appears to reflect the influence of Bandura’s social learning theory on European American parenting. Teaching strategies were also the most recommended socialization strategies by Chinese mothers for withdrawn behaviors in Cheah and Rubin’s study (2004).

The proportion of total strategy responses for European American mothers was twice as much as that for Bangladeshi mothers. European American mothers also recorded a high proportion of directive strategies in which they detailed step-by-step instruction on how to handle the behavior. This strategy was also frequently recommended by the Italian and Canadian mothers for social withdrawal (Schneider et al., 1997). Bangladeshi mothers again suggested the “other” strategies of seeking professional help for the child and spending more time with the child most often for shyness stories. The suggestion that a mother spending more time with her child may be a reflection of the practice of Bangladeshi mothers utilizing live-in nannies as caretakers for their children and a feeling that a withdrawn or shy child may need more time with their mother. Bangladeshi mothers also recommended teaching, seeking information from the child and providing opportunities in almost equal proportions for shyness, strategies frequently recommended by mothers in other cultures for social withdrawal.
Limitations and Future Directions

The present study sought to expand the cross-cultural research on parenting beliefs about problem social behaviors and to increase understanding of how these beliefs vary in different cultural contexts. The research did have some limitations, not the least of which was regarding the participants. For research using survey data, the sample size was comparatively small in both cultures. Additionally, the mothers were from middle and upper-socioeconomic status, had similarly high education levels and resided in only urban areas. Socioeconomic status has been shown to be related to parenting beliefs and practices (Cheah & Rubin, 2004) and may be related to beliefs about children’s social development. Additionally, the majority of Bangladeshis have low socioeconomic status; therefore, the sample in the current study is not representative of most Bangladeshi mothers. Future research in Bangladesh should include a larger sample size and more socioeconomic diversity.

With regard to the methodology, another limitation is that the vignettes utilized in this research were limited by the types of aggressive, withdrawn and shyness depicted, perhaps causing a narrow view of the mothers’ beliefs about these behaviors. Many other forms of these problematic social behaviors were not present in the existing methodology (Cheah & Park, 2006) and represent interesting areas for future study. For example, future methodology could include instances of verbal and relational aggression. Furthermore, the addition of parent interviews and observational methodology would improve the overall understanding of the cultural context in which the parents are situated.
and assist in connecting the survey responses to the cultural practices of child
socialization. It is possible that the mothers would have given more extensive responses
in interviews about the strategies they recommended and why the mothers reported the
emotional reactions they did. It is also possible that the mothers’ beliefs about observed,
real events would be different than the hypothetical events depicted in the vignettes.

Another limitation of the study is that it focused on cultural differences in the
beliefs of mothers only. An important direction for future research is to examine fathers’
beliefs and how their perceptions help to shape the developmental niche of the child, due
to the increasingly hands-on role of fathers (Bonney, Kelley & Levent, 1999; Cheah &
Park, 2006; Cheah & Rubin, 2004). Bonney, Kelley and Levant (1999) suggest that
fathers’ gender role identity influences their parenting behavior differently than that of
mothers and exactly how fathers behavior influences their emotional reactions,
attributions, and parenting strategies in different cultures should be considered.

Finally, the analysis of the data was limited to descriptive statistics and analysis of
variance. An additional interesting future direction may be to analyze the relationship
between emotional reactions and causal attributions and the type of recommended
strategies. For example, it may be that mothers who report higher anger in response to
aggression vignettes tend to recommend more high power parenting strategies and this
relationship may differ cross-culturally. Also, mothers who believe that a child’s
behaviors were unintentional may tend to recommend more low power strategies like
teaching and providing more social interaction for their child.
Aside from the limitations and suggestion for further study described, the research presented here provides a first step in understanding how Bangladeshi mothers’ beliefs about problematic social behaviors reflects their cultural values about socializing young children and how those beliefs compare to mothers in other cultural contexts. Overall, Bangladeshi and European American mothers in this study seemed to be more alike than dissimilar in their emotional reactions and causal attributions for the behaviors depicted in the vignettes. However, the mothers in both cultures tended to differ in the parenting strategies they recommended across behaviors, with aggressive behavior resulting in the most divergent results cross-culturally.
APPENDIX A

Bangladeshi Demographic Survey
Demographic Survey

This survey is used to find out general information about your family. While your participation is voluntary, it is very much appreciated. Your responses will be kept confidential. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability and thank you for participating in this research.

1. Your age _______

2. Your children’s age(s) and gender (please circle M or F):

   _____M / F _____M / F _____M / F _____M / F _____M / F _____M / F _____M / F

3. Your current occupation ________________________________

4. Please circle the highest level of education completed:

   Primary school
   Secondary school
   Some college
   Bachelor’s Degree
   Master’s Degree or higher

5. Your religion (if any) ________________________________
APPENDIX B

US Demographic Survey
Demographic Survey

This survey is used to find out general information about your family. While your participation is voluntary, it is very much appreciated. Your responses will be kept confidential. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability and thank you for participating in this research.

1. Your age _______

2. Your children’s age(s) and gender (please circle M or F):
   _____M / F_____M / F_____M / F_____M / F_____M / F_____M / F_____M / F

3. Your current occupation ________________________________________________

4. Please circle the highest level of education completed:
   
   Elementary school
   Junior high school
   High school
   Some college
   Bachelor’s Degree
   Master’s Degree or higher

5. Please indicate your ethnicity/ethnicities (e.g. European American, African American, Mexican American, Chinese American):
   ____________________________________________________________________

6. Your religion (if any) _________________________________________________
APPENDIX C

Vignettes
Vignettes

Story 1

The last three times a mother arrives to pick up her child from an activity group, she sees her 4 year-old child playing in a group. Each time, the mother notices that whenever her child wants a toy that another child is playing with, her child grabs the toy and pushes the other child down.

Story 2

The last few times a child has invited a friend over to play, his/her mother has found that the children spent a lot of time fighting over toys and activities.

Story 3

Several times over the past month, while helping out at children’s birthday parties, a mother has had an opportunity to observe her 4 year-old child at play. Each time, she notices that her child spends most of the time playing alone, never trying to join the others in their games.

Story 4

The last few times a mother has gone to her child’s playgroup to pick her/him up, the mother has been able to observe her child during free play. On each occasion, she notices that her child is not playing with anyone and that she/he spends almost the entire time alone.

Story 5

After leaving a child at preschool, a mother watches her child from outside the building without the child being aware. The mother sees her child standing against a wall, watching other children playing with a toy the child enjoys. The mother notices the child is interested, but stays against the wall and keeps his/her chin down. The mother has seen the child acting like this at other times.

Story 6

A mother and child arrive at a birthday party for a family friend. The child holds on to the mother’s leg and does not reply when spoken to by the other children, or if the child does speak, it is in a whisper.
APPENDIX D

Maternal Proactive Beliefs Questionnaire
Social Skills Questionnaire

Please read the following stories and answer the questions that follow, by imagining how a mother would react to each of the behaviors.

**Story 1**

_The last three times a mother arrives to pick up her child from an activity group, she sees her 4 year-old child playing in a group. Each time, the mother notices that whenever her child wants a toy that another child is playing with, her child grabs the toy and pushes the other child down._

How does a mother feel when she sees her child act this way several times in a row? For each emotion, please indicate the level of your emotional response from 1 to 5.

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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>3. Disappointed</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What would be a reason for a child behaving this way? (Please circle one response per term)

9. Disposition

| Completely due to the child’s nature or personality | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Completely due to the situation |

10. Stability

| Definitely a temporary stage | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Definitely will act this way in the future |
11. Intention
The child acted this way on purpose 1 2 3 4 5

The child definitely didn’t do this on purpose

Still thinking about Story 1, please provide answers to the following questions (the back of the paper can be used for additional space):

12. What, if anything, should a mother do about the child’s behavior?

13. What would a mother hope to accomplish by handling it that way?

14. What would her goals be in this situation?

Story 2

The last few times a child has invited a friend over to play, his/her mother has found that the children spent a lot of time fighting over toys and activities.

How does a mother feel when she sees her child act this way several times in a row? For each emotion, please indicate the level of your emotional response from 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. Angry</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>16. Anxious</td>
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<td>17. Disappointed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Disgusted</td>
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<td>19. Embarrassed</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Hurt</td>
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<td>21. Guilty</td>
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<td>22. Puzzled</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What would be a reason for a child behaving this way? (Please circle one response per term)

23. **Disposition**  
Completely due to the child’s nature or personality  
Completely due to the situation  
1  2  3  4  5

24. **Stability**  
Definitely a temporary stage  
Definitely will act this way in the future  
1  2  3  4  5

25. **Intention**  
The child acted this way on purpose  
The child definitely didn’t act this on purpose  
1  2  3  4  5

Still thinking about Story 2, please provide answers to the following questions (the back of the paper can be used for additional space):

26. What, if anything, should a mother do about the child’s behavior?

27. What would a mother hope to accomplish by handling it that way?

28. What would her goals be in this situation?

**Story 3**

*Several times over the past month, while helping out at children’s birthday parties, a mother has had an opportunity to observe her 4 year-old child at play. Each time, she notices that her child spends most of the time playing alone, never trying to join the others in their games.*

How does a mother feel when she sees her child act this way several times in a row? For each emotion, please indicate the level of your emotional response from 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>29. Angry</strong></td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td><strong>30. Anxious</strong></td>
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<td>Term</td>
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<td>Disgusted</td>
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What would be a reason for a child behaving this way? (Please circle one response per term)

**37. Disposition**
- Completely due to the child’s nature or personality
- Completely due to the situation

**38. Stability**
- Definitely a temporary stage
- Definitely will act this way in the future

**39. Intention**
- The child acted this way on purpose
- The child definitely didn’t do this on purpose

Still thinking about Story 3, please provide answers to the following questions (the back of the paper can be used for additional space):

40. What, if anything, should a mother do about the child’s behavior?

41. What would a mother hope to accomplish by handling it that way?

42. What would her goals be in this situation?
Story 4

The last few times a mother has gone to her child’s playgroup to pick her/him up, the mother has been able to observe her child during free play. On each occasion, she notices that her child is not playing with anyone and that she/he spends almost the entire time alone.

How does a mother feel when she sees her child act this way several times in a row? For each emotion, please indicate the level of your emotional response from 1 to 5.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at All</th>
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<th>3</th>
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<th>Extremely</th>
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<tr>
<td>43. Angry</td>
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<td>46. Disgusted</td>
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<td>48. Hurt</td>
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<td>49. Guilty</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>50. Puzzled</td>
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What would be a reason for a child behaving this way? (Please circle one response per term)

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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Completely due to the situation</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52. Stability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Definitely a temporary stage</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Definitely will act this way in the future</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53. Intention</td>
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<tr>
<td>The child acted this way on purpose</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>The child definitely didn’t do this on purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Still thinking about Story 4, please provide answers to the following questions (the back of the paper can be used for additional space):

54. What, if anything, should a mother do about the child’s behavior?

55. What would a mother hope to accomplish by handling it that way?

56. What would her goals be in this situation?

*Story 5*

*After leaving a child at preschool, a mother watches her child from outside the building without the child being aware. The mother sees her child standing against a wall, watching other children playing with a toy the child enjoys. The mother notices the child is interested, but stays against the wall and keeps his/her chin down. The mother has seen the child acting like this at other times.*

How does a mother feel when she sees her child act this way several times in a row? For each emotion, please indicate the level of your emotional response from 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57. Angry</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. Anxious</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. Disappointed</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>60. Disgusted</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. Embarrassed</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. Hurt</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. Guilty</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. Puzzled</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What would be a reason for a child behaving this way? (Please circle one response per term)

65. Disposition
Completely due to the child’s nature or personality

66. Stability
Definitely a temporary stage

67. Intention
The child acted this way on purpose

Still thinking about Story 5, please provide answers to the following questions (the back of the paper can be used for additional space):

68. What, if anything, should a mother do about the child’s behavior?

69. What would a mother hope to accomplish by handling it that way?

70. What would her goals be in this situation?

Story 6

A mother and child arrive at a birthday party for a family friend. The child holds on to the mother’s leg and does not reply when spoken to by the other children, or if the child does speak, it is in a whisper.

How does a mother feel when she sees her child act this way several times in a row? For each emotion, please indicate the level of your emotional response from 1 to 5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>72. Anxious</strong></td>
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<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>73. Disappointed</strong></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>74. Disgusted</strong></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>75. Embarrassed</strong></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>76. Hurt</strong></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>77. Guilty</strong></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>78. Puzzled</strong></td>
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What would be a reason for a child behaving this way? (Please circle one response per term)

**79. Disposition**
Completely due to the child’s nature or personality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
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<tr>
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</table>

**80. Stability**
Definitely a temporary stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Definitely will act this way in the future</td>
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</table>

**81. Intention**
The child acted this way on purpose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The child definitely didn’t do this on purpose</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child definitely didn’t do this on purpose</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Still thinking about Story 5, please provide answers to the following questions (the back of the paper can be used for additional space):

82. What, if anything, should a mother do about the child’s behavior?

83. What would a mother hope to accomplish by handling it that way?

84. What would her goals be in this situation?
APPENDIX E

Parenting Socialization Strategy Coding Descriptions
Parenting Socialization Strategy Coding Descriptions
(Cheah & Rubin, 2004)

(1) forcing appropriate behavior (e.g., verbally commanding the child or physically making the child behave appropriately).
Example: making the child give the toy back to the other child.

(2) punishment (e.g., administration of aversive consequences: withdrawal of privileges, social or physical isolation, physical punishment, or separating the children if fighting).
Example: giving the child a time-out or taking away a toy for the day.

(3) threat (e.g., threat of punishment).
Example: telling the child that if they do not behave, they will be punished.

(4) suggestions (e.g., gently persuading or offering suggestions of child behavior).
Example: redirecting the child.

(5) directiveness (e.g., providing step-by-step instructions for behavior).
Example: first, get down on the child’s level, then tell the child why they shouldn’t act that way, then show the child another toy, etc.

(6) resolve (e.g., helping the child reach solution to the problem).
Example: finding out what caused a behavior and speaking with the other child involved to solve the issue.

(7) other-oriented reasoning (e.g., referring to others’ needs or to the potential physical or emotional consequences of the child’s behavior for others; i.e. training in perspective-taking or empathy).
Example: telling the child that they have hurt another child’s feelings with their behavior.

(8) self-oriented reasoning (e.g., referring to consequences of the child’s behavior for the self).
Example: telling the child that the behavior will make others not want to play with them.

(9) normative statements (e.g., unembellished statements referring to social or moral values).
Example: telling the child that their behavior is not acceptable.
(10) *discussion* (e.g., statements about the situation or desired behavior followed by an explanation for why the behavior is desired or the situation is such). Example: explaining why the child behaved that way.

(11) *emotional appeal* (e.g., appeals to the child’s conscience; guilt induction; statement of parent’s personal reaction to the child’s action). Example: telling the child they should feel bad about the way they behaved.

(12) *seek explanation from the child* (e.g., ask the child for an explanation for the behavior). Example: asking the child what caused them to act that way.

(13) *provide opportunity* (e.g., create or plan to create opportunities for child to play with others or learn the skill). Example: suggesting playdates with other children to socialize.

(14) *modeling* (e.g., demonstrating the desired behavior for the child). Example: showing the child how to participate in the play with other children.

(15) *education* (e.g., referring to cultivating the appropriate behavior in the child or training the child in the appropriate behaviors). Example: telling the child that they should be gentle and telling them how to share.
REFERENCES


