

## The Applicability of Familism to Diverse Ethnic Groups: A Preliminary Study

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**ABSTRACT.** The author examined the extent to which familism, which is generally regarded as a Hispanic cultural value, is applicable to other ethnic groups as well. An ethnically diverse sample of 318 Hispanic, non-Hispanic White, and non-Hispanic Black young adults completed measures of attitudinal familism, collectivism, and interdependence. Confirmatory factor analyses indicated that the scoring algorithm for the familism measure fit the data well, both overall and across ethnic groups. The author conducted analyses to ascertain (a) differences in the factor structure of familism, (b) mean differences in endorsement of familism, and (c) differences in associations of familism with collectivism and interdependence between Hispanics and the other ethnic groups. Few significant or noteworthy differences emerged in any of these analyses, suggesting that familism may be applicable to and may operate similarly within diverse ethnic groups. The author discussed findings in terms of convergence between familism and other collectivist and interdependent value orientations.

Keywords: collectivism, cross-ethnic consistency, familism, Hispanic, interdependence

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*FAMILISM* is generally considered a hallmark of Hispanic culture (Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987). Defined in the most general terms as prioritizing one's family over oneself, familism is regarded as a cultural value that sets Hispanics apart from other cultural groups (Santisteban, Muir-Malcolm, Mitrani, & Szapocznik, 2002). For example, familism represents one mechanism that helps Hispanic immigrants hold on to their heritage culture (Sabogal et al.) and that protects them from destructive outcomes such as drug and alcohol misuse (Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000; Ramirez et al., 2004). Moreover, familism has been identified as a key process in Hispanic people's

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parenting (Bush, Supple, & Lash, 2004), an important mechanism that helps Hispanic parents protect their adolescents against problematic outcomes in American society (Santisteban, Coatsworth, Briones, & Szapocznik, 2005), and a concept that prompts Hispanic caregivers of developmentally disabled adults to accept and fulfill their caregiving role without complaint (Magaña, Schwartz, Rubert, & Szapocznik, 2006). In many cases, when Hispanic people manifest allegiance toward family or fulfill family roles to a greater extent than do other ethnic groups, familism is implicated as an explanation (e.g., Bulcroft, Carmody, & Bulcroft, 1996; Toth & Xu, 1999).

Although not explicitly stated, there is an implicit assumption in the extant literature that familism is primarily applicable to Hispanic people. However, there is some evidence that familism may apply to other ethnic groups as well. For example, Coohy (2001) found that familism was protective against child abuse for both Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites. Gaines et al. (1997) found that familism was endorsed highly by Hispanics, African Americans, and Asian Americans. Moreover, there is some evidence that the relations of familism to adolescent or young adult risk-taking behavior among other outcomes, are consistent across ethnic groups (e.g., Slesnick, Vazquez, & Bittinger, 2002; Unger et al., 2002). Moreover, researchers have used the term *familism* with reference to both Hispanics and other ethnic minority groups, such as Caribbean Islanders (Chamberlain, 2003) and Asians (Youn, Knight, Jeong, & Benton, 1999). One can infer, then, that the applicability of familism may generalize across ethnic groups. Specifically, such cross-ethnic applicability could be hypothesized in three forms: (a) *factor structure* (how the construct is represented), (b) *mean endorsement* (the extent to which the construct is endorsed), and (c) *convergent validity* (ways in which the construct relates to other similar variables, such as collectivism and interdependence). Accordingly, I designed the present study, in part, to provide preliminary but more direct evidence in these three forms for the cross-ethnic applicability of familism.

Regardless of the ethnic group to which it is applied, familism emphasizes prioritizing the family over the individual, showing respect for elders, and honoring the family name. Broadly, familism and other similar cultural constructs may reflect a collectivist value system (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006), where *collectivism* is defined as “interdependen[ce] within in-groups . . . giv[ing] priority to the goals of the in-group, shap[ing] behavior primarily on the basis of in-group norms, and behav[ing] in a communal way” (Triandis, 2001, p. 909). In fact, Realo, Allik, and Vadi (1997) explicitly designated familism as a component of collectivism. In developing a recent familism measure, Lugo Steidel and Contreras (2003) identified four components of familism, namely familial honor, respect for familial elders, familial interdependence, and subjugation of self to family. These same components may also characterize other collectivist values such as communalism, which many assume is applicable to people of African descent (Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, & Albury, 1997); and filial piety, which appears

applicable to individuals of Southeast Asian descent (Yeh & Bedford, 2003). For example, filial piety is also related to decreased levels of parent–child conflict (Yeh & Bedford, 2004) and to a greater proclivity to care for older parents (Bedford & Hwang, 2003). Therefore, it is possible that what is labeled as *familism* may actually generalize to other ethnic groups beside Hispanics, and especially to groups that espouse collectivist principles. Indeed, familism, with filial piety and communalism, may be representative of a larger construct (i.e., collectivism or interdependence) that is applicable across cultural and ethnic contexts. As Kao and Travis (2005, pp. 682–683) observed, “Most striking ... [are] the similarities between the construct of ‘filial piety’ and the [Hispanic] concept of ‘familism’: attachment and loyalty of individuals to their families.” Moreover, in light of research portraying individualism and collectivism as complementary rather than opposing (Coon & Kimmelmeier, 2001; Matsumoto, 1999; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002), it is entirely possible that familism is equally applicable to primarily individualist groups and primarily collectivist groups. Accordingly, the present exploratory study included one comparison ethnic group that was designated as *collectivist* (non-Hispanic Blacks) and one comparison ethnic group that was designated as *individualist* (non-Hispanic Whites).

In Miami, the category of “non-Hispanic Blacks” includes both African Americans and Caribbean Islanders (e.g., Haitians, Jamaicans). African Americans have resided in the Miami area for many generations (Dunn, 1997), whereas the majority of Caribbean Islanders have arrived in the last two generations (Kasinitz, Battle, & Miyares, 2001; Stepick, Stepick, Eugene, Teed, & Labisiere, 2001). African Americans and Caribbean Islanders face different social and cultural challenges (e.g., residual effects of slavery and indentured servitude versus issues of immigration and acculturation). At the same time, these two Black subgroups both face racial stigmatization and discrimination and tend to highlight the importance of family (Chamberlain, 2003; Nobles, Goddard, Cavi, & George, 1987). Moreover, communalism, which is conceptually similar to familism (Schwartz et al., 2006), has been posited as a value system applicable to diverse groups of African descent (Boykin et al., 1997). For these reasons, and because the sample sizes within each subgroup were fairly small, I combined these two groups into a non-Hispanic Black group for the present analyses.

### *The Present Study*

My objective in the present study was to explore the applicability of familism to both Hispanics and non-Hispanics. I conducted the present study in Miami, a city that is dominated by Hispanic culture and in which Hispanics hold the majority of political and economic power (Croucher, 2002; Stepick & Stepick, 2002). Miami is home to one of the most diverse Hispanic populations in the United States and to a large number of non-Hispanic Whites, African Americans, and Caribbean immigrants. Perhaps because Miami is dominated by Hispanic culture,

research results have indicated that African Americans (Dunn, 1997), Caribbean immigrants (Kasinitz, Battle, & Miyares, 2001; Stepick et al., 2001), and non-Hispanic Whites (Huntington, 2004) may not be active participants in that culture—and may in fact be marginalized from it. As a result, one might argue that Miami provides both (a) a Hispanic-dominated city consisting of diverse Hispanic groups and (b) comparison ethnic groups that may or may not be influenced by or involved in the majority Hispanic cultural context. Miami also has been described as a model for what other parts of the United States might look like in the next few decades (Huntington). As the representation of Hispanics in the U.S. population continues to increase, more Miami-like Hispanic enclaves are likely to appear, especially in the Southwest and the West. Because Hispanic culture and its influence on the United States is likely to continue to spread, it may be important to study purportedly Hispanic-specific cultural values and their applicability to other U.S. ethnic groups. The present study may also open a line of research addressing a larger question: whether collectivist values such as familism are group-specific or transcend specific ethnic or cultural groups.

As stated earlier, I proposed and evaluated three hypotheses regarding the cross-ethnic applicability of familism. First, I hypothesized that the factor structure of familism would be consistent across ethnic groups. Second, I hypothesized that no significant mean differences in familism scores would emerge across ethnic groups. Third, I hypothesized that the convergent validity of familism—that is, its relationship to similar cultural constructs such as collectivism and interdependence—would be consistent across ethnic groups. Support for these hypotheses would suggest that, although familism was proposed as a Hispanic-specific value system, it may indeed be applicable to other ethnic groups as well.

I evaluated these hypotheses in three steps. First, because the present sample differed markedly from the sample on which the familism measure was developed (i.e., college students who were taking courses in English versus Spanish-dominant adults in community settings), I conducted a confirmatory factor analysis on the Hispanic participants in the sample to ascertain the extent to which the measure was appropriate for use in the present sample. Only Hispanic participants were included in this initial analysis because of the assumption that familism is a Hispanic-specific value system. This analysis also provided evidence regarding the extent to which the factor structure of familism may be equivalent across variations in age, level of acculturation, and setting (i.e., university vs. community).

If the measurement algorithm fit adequately with the Hispanics in the present sample, I would then ascertain the consistency of this factor structure between Hispanics and non-Hispanics. A finding that the factor structure of familism held together more strongly for Hispanics than for other ethnic groups would suggest that familism is applicable primarily to Hispanics, whereas a finding of equivalent factor structure would suggest that familism may be applicable across ethnic groups.

Second, if the factor structure of the familism items was equivalent between Hispanics and non-Hispanics, the next step would be to compare mean familism

scores across ethnic groups. A finding that mean scores for Hispanics were significantly greater than those for other ethnic groups would suggest that familism is endorsed more highly among Hispanics than among non-Hispanics, whereas a finding of equivalent familism means across ethnic groups would suggest equivalent endorsement of familism across ethnic groups.

Third, to the extent that familism represents a collectivist and interdependent value orientation across groups (cf. Realo et al., 1997; Schwartz et al., 2006), it should map equivalently across groups onto measures of collectivism and interdependence.

## Method

### *Participants*

Participants were 318 young-adult students (28% men and 72% women;  $M_{\text{age}} = 20.15$  years,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 2.81$  years) attending a culturally diverse university in Miami. I recruited participants from introductory psychology courses. They received course credit for their participation.

The majority of participants (74%) were U.S.-born, whereas the majority of their mothers (72%) and fathers (75%) were born abroad. Consistent with the fact that the participants were from introductory psychology courses, nearly half the sample (46%) was composed of 1st-year students, and 2nd-year (24%) and 3rd-year (22%) students made up most of the remainder.

Consistent with the demographics of the Miami area, the majority of participants (62%) were Hispanic. Non-Hispanic Whites (18%) and non-Hispanic Blacks (20%) made up the remainder. Of Hispanic participants, 71% reported that both of their parents were born in the same Hispanic country, 15% reported that their parents were from different Hispanic countries, 11% reported that one parent was born in the United States, and 4% reported that both parents were born in the United States. Of Hispanic participants reporting that both of their parents were born in the same Hispanic country, the countries with the largest representations were Cuba (48%), Colombia (16%), Nicaragua (10%), Peru (8%), and the Dominican Republic (5%). Of non-Hispanic Whites, all but 2 (96%) were U.S.-born, and 78% reported that both parents were born in the United States. Consistent with the demographics of the South Florida area, the majority of Caribbean Islanders were Haitian (52%) or Jamaican (26%). Fifty-four percent of Caribbean Islander participants were U.S.-born. All African American participants reported that they and both of their parents were born in the United States.

### *Measures*

*Familism.* I used the Attitudinal Familism Scale (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003) to assess familism. The measure consists of 18 items assessing familial support,

familial interconnectedness, familial honor, and subjugation of self to family. For the present study, I used the total familism score ( $\alpha = .83$  as reported by Lugo Steidel & Contreras;  $\alpha = .82$  in the present sample). I used a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A sample item from this measure is, "Parents and grandparents should be treated with great respect regardless of their differences in views."<sup>1</sup> Lugo Steidel and Contreras developed and validated the measure by using a sample of Hispanic adults in Cleveland, Ohio, most of whom preferred to respond in Spanish. Differences between the validation sample and the present sample permitted examination of the extent to which, among Hispanics, the structure of familism would be consistent across variations in age, acculturation level, and setting.

*Collectivism and interdependence.* I used shortened versions of the horizontal and vertical collectivism scales designed by Triandis and Gelfand (1998), and the interdependence subscale from the Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994), to ascertain the extent to which familism was associated with collectivism and interdependence across ethnic groups. High scores on these scales indicate greater endorsement of collectivism or interdependence. The horizontal and vertical collectivism subscales contain items designed by Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, and Gelfand (1995) to measure the hypothesized horizontal and vertical dimensions of individualism and collectivism. The horizontal collectivism subscale measures the extent to which individuals feel responsible for and connected to others at the same social stratum (e.g., friends, coworkers). The subscale contains four items ( $\alpha = .70$  in the present sample), including, "I feel good when I cooperate with others." The vertical collectivism subscale measures the extent to which individuals value the groups to which they belong (e.g., family) and respect the decisions of these groups. The subscale contains four items ( $\alpha = .64$ ), including, "It is important that I respect the decisions made by groups I belong to." Singelis developed the Self-Construal Scale by gathering and writing items assessing the importance of self in relation to others. The interdependence subscale contains 12 items ( $\alpha = .65$ , compared with  $\alpha = .74$  in Singelis's study), including, "My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me." I used a 5-point Likert-type scale in the present study (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*).

*Acculturation.* Although acculturation was not a focus of the present study, I used scores on the Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale (Stephenson, 2000) to characterize the sample. Stephenson created this measure through reviews of existing acculturation instruments and consultation with community professionals and experts from diverse ethnic groups. The measure consists of 32 items, 15 assessing acquisition of American cultural practices ( $\alpha = .71$  in the present sample;  $\alpha = .75$  in Stephenson's Study 3) and 17 assessing retention of heritage-culture cultural practices ( $\alpha = .87$  in the present sample;  $\alpha = .94$  in Stephenson's Study 3). Sample items include, "I like to eat American foods" and "I like to

listen to music of my ethnic group.” I used a 5-point Likert-type scale in the present study.

### *Procedure*

The Institutional Review Boards at two universities in the Miami area approved the present study. Participants signed their consent forms and completed the questionnaires at home and returned the completed materials to their course instructors. I did not collect any identifying information from participants. Participation in the study partially fulfilled the requirements for the courses in which participants were enrolled.

## **Results**

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics and internal consistency estimates for study variables.

### *Examination of Previously Validated Factor Structure*

Because the Attitudinal Familism Scale was developed using a very different population than that in the present study, I conducted a confirmatory factor analysis on the familism scores to ensure that the factor structure reported by Lugo Steidel and Contreras (2003) fit the present data adequately. I conducted this analysis only with the Hispanic participants in the sample. I evaluated the adequacy of the factor solution by using the comparative fit index (CFI), which represents

**TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency Estimates for Study Variables**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha^a$	Range	Possible range
Familism	63.99	8.47	.82	34–90	18–90
Collectivism					
Horizontal	15.14	2.21	.65	7–20	4–20
Vertical	14.79	2.81	.74	5–20	4–20
Interdependence	39.66	5.85	.72	20–58	12–60
Acculturation					
American orientation	59.55	7.81	.83	34–75	15–75
Heritage orientation	59.23	12.34	.90	17–85	17–85

<sup>a</sup>Alpha coefficients are from the present study.

the improvement of the specified model over a null model with no paths or latent variables; and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), which represents the extent to which the covariances in the model deviate from those observed in the data. I also used the ratio of the chi-square value to the number of degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ) as an index of model fit. Generally, researchers have accepted .90 as the lower bound for an acceptable CFI value, .08 as the upper bound for an acceptable RMSEA value, and 3.0 as the upper bound for an acceptable  $\chi^2/df$  value. The 90% confidence interval for the RMSEA value provides further evidence for acceptable model fit, especially if the entire confidence interval is below .08 (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). Results of this analysis indicated that the published factor structure provided an adequate fit to the present data,  $\chi^2(119) = 160.40$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.35$ , CFI = .94, RMSEA = .042. The 90% confidence interval for the RMSEA index ranged from .023 to .058. Table 2 shows the factor pattern coefficients from this analysis.

#### *Equivalence of Familism Factor Structure Between Hispanics and Non-Hispanics*

To test the first hypothesis, that the factor structure of the familism items would be equivalent between Hispanics and non-Hispanics, I conducted a multigroup confirmatory factor analysis (Byrne, 2001; Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). In this analysis, I compared the fit of a model with factor pattern coefficients being free to vary across groups against the fit of a model with factor pattern coefficients being constrained as equal across groups (cf. Raju, Laffitte, & Byrne, 2002). The present multigroup analyses are exploratory, given that the fairly small sample sizes in the non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black groups do not meet established power criteria for structural equation models (i.e., at least 5–10 participants per estimated parameter; Kline, 1998). Researchers using statistical simulation have found that the most common problems occurring in confirmatory factor analyses with small samples were failure to converge on a solution, lowered acceptability of model fit indexes (e.g., decreases in CFI and nonnormed fit index [NNFI], and increases in RMSEA), misestimated model parameters, and artificially low standard errors (Bentler & Yuan, 1999; Nevitt & Hancock, 2004). Because such problems would artificially adjust model parameters and fit indexes within each group, they would likely result in a finding of noninvariance across samples. A finding of invariance across groups would suggest that the sample size problems likely did not affect the results of the comparison and that the model may be robust to small sample sizes.

Following Little (1997), I compared the constrained model and the unconstrained model by using differences between the two models in the CFI, the nonnormed fit index (NNFI), and the chi-square statistics. Little suggested such a method because, when used alone, the chi-square difference test often indicates significant deviations between the constrained model and the unconstrained

**TABLE 2. Factor Pattern Coefficients for Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Familism Items**

Item	Factor pattern coefficient $\lambda$
A person should live near his or her parents and spend time with them on a regular basis.	.49**
Aging parents should live with their relatives.	.36**
A person should help his or her elderly parents in times of need, for example, help financially or share a house.	.55**
Children should always help their parents with the support of younger brothers and sisters, for example, help them with homework, help the parents take care of the children, and so forth.	.52**
A person should rely on his or her family if the need arises.	.46**
A person should always support members of the extended family, for example, aunts, uncles, and in-laws, if they are in need even if it is a big sacrifice.	.52**
Parents and grandparents should be treated with great respect regardless of their differences in views.	.63**
A person should often do activities with his or her immediate and extended families, for example, eat meals, play games, go somewhere together, or work on things together.	.62**
The family should control the behavior of children younger than 18.	.49**
A person should cherish time spent with his or her relatives.	.56**
Children should help out around the house without expecting an allowance.	.41**
Children younger than 18 should give almost all their earnings to their parents.	.11
A person should feel ashamed if something he or she does dishonors the family name.	.34**
Children should live with their parents until they get married.	.23*
A person should always be expected to defend his or her family's honor no matter what the cost.	.50**
A person should respect his or her older brothers and sisters regardless of their differences in views.	.43**
A person should be a good person for the sake of his or her family.	.52**
Children should obey their parents without question even if they believe they are wrong.	.29**

*Note.* These items were taken from "A New Familism Scale for Use With Latino Populations," by A. G. Lugo Steidel and J. M. Contreras, 2003, *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 25, pp. 312-330. Copyright 2003 by Sage Publications. Reprinted with permission of Sage Publications.

\* $p < .01$ . \*\* $p < .001$ .

model even when the fit statistics themselves are only trivially different. Current standards in the field maintain a significant chi-square difference (Byrne, 2001),

a difference in CFI values of .01 or greater (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002), and a difference in NNFI values of .02 or greater (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000) between the constrained model and the unconstrained model as indicating a meaningful difference in model fit across groups. Results of the multigroup confirmatory analysis indicated that the factor structure of the familism items was equivalent across the three ethnic groups studied,  $\Delta\chi^2(30) = 25.67$ ,  $p = .69$ ,  $\Delta CFI = .003$ ,  $\Delta NNFI = .019$ .

#### *Comparison of Mean Familism Scores Across Ethnic Groups*

To test the second hypothesis, that mean familism scores would not differ significantly by ethnic group, I conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the familism scores by ethnic group. This analysis did not yield a statistically significant effect,  $F(2, 312) = 3.01$ ,  $p = .14$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ .

#### *Relation of Familism to Collectivism and Interdependence*

Testing the third hypothesis, that familism would display equivalent convergent validity across ethnic groups, involved correlating familism scores with scores on horizontal collectivism, vertical collectivism, and interdependence; and comparing the strengths of these correlations across ethnic groups. Theoretically, familism appears to be most comparable to vertical collectivism, because both of these cultural ideals assume that people place the needs of the family over their own needs (Realo et al., 1997). Indeed, some of the largest correlation coefficients, both for Hispanics and for non-Hispanics, were between the familism dimensions and vertical collectivism (see Table 3). Using an effect size of .20 or greater (cf. Cohen, 1988) as an indicator of a meaningful correlation difference between groups, I found ethnic differences in only two of the six comparisons that I conducted. The relation of familism to both vertical collectivism and interdependence was stronger for Hispanics than for non-Hispanic Blacks. None of the correlations differed between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites at an effect size of .20 or greater. Therefore, I concluded that the collectivist and interdependent underpinnings of familism appeared to be equivalent between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites, whereas some differences emerged between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Blacks.

### **Discussion**

I designed the present study to begin to examine the extent to which familism is Hispanic-specific versus generalizable to other ethnic groups. The present study was the first to include empirical analyses of the Hispanic-specificity versus generalizability of familism in terms of factor structure, mean endorsement, and convergent validity. I used a previously validated familism scale that was created

**TABLE 3. Relation of Familism to Collectivism and Interdependence**

Variable	Collectivism		Interdependence
	Horizontal	Vertical	
Correlations			
Hispanic	.36	.61	.47
Non-Hispanic White	.25	.57	.35
Non-Hispanic Black	.21	.42	.16
Correlation differences			
Hispanic vs. White <sup>a</sup>	.12	.06	.14
Hispanic vs. Black <sup>a</sup>	.16	.26	.35

*Note.* Because the ethnic groups varied considerably in sample size, and because statistical significance is a function of both effect size and sample size, statistical significance is not presented in this table.

<sup>a</sup>Effect size for the difference between correlation coefficients was computed using the *q* index. As with Cohen's *d*, .20 is regarded as a small effect size, .50 is regarded as a medium effect size, and .80 is regarded as a large effect size.

with a sample of Spanish-dominant adult community residents. Among the Hispanic participants in the present sample, for whom many have assumed familism to be most relevant, the measurement algorithm fit the data well. This finding suggests that the applicability of familism across Hispanic subgroups does not differ across levels of acculturation, region of the United States, or age group.

#### *Generalizability of Familism Between Hispanics and Other Ethnic Groups*

I explored the applicability of familism to diverse ethnic groups by testing three specific hypotheses: (a) that the factor structure of familism would be consistent between Hispanics and other ethnic groups, (b) that mean endorsement of familism would not differ between Hispanics and other ethnic groups, and (c) that convergent validity of familism scores with measures of collectivism and interdependence would not differ between Hispanics and other ethnic groups. A construct that is truly Hispanic-specific should be characterized by a more consistent and viable factor structure for Hispanics than for other ethnic groups (Benet-Martínez & John, 1998). However, the present results supported the alternative hypothesis in the present study: The factor structure of familism did not differ between Hispanics and non-Hispanics. The same factor structure emerged for both Hispanics and non-Hispanics, suggesting that familism (at least as measured by the Attitudinal Familism Scale) may take similar forms in Hispanic and non-Hispanic ethnic groups.

Supporting the second hypothesis, mean endorsement of familism also did not differ across ethnic groups. All of the ethnic groups in the present study

endorsed familism to moderate extents: Hispanics,  $M = 3.57$  on a 1–5 scale; non-Hispanic Whites,  $M = 3.45$ ; and non-Hispanic Blacks,  $M = 3.61$ . Supporting the third hypothesis, across ethnic groups, familism appeared to demonstrate strong correlations with measures of vertical collectivism, which represents respect for and deference to family members and other authority figures. However, the relations of familism to vertical collectivism and to interdependence were stronger for Hispanics than for non-Hispanic Blacks. This finding may, to some extent, contradict the hypothesis and support the Hispanic-specificity of familism.

Given the effects of acculturation on some aspects of familism (Sabogal et al., 1987), one might assume that the Hispanic participants in the present study were fairly Americanized and may have distanced themselves somewhat from Hispanic cultural values and practices. This possibility may be especially tenable because the present sample was recruited from university courses taught in English. For Hispanic participants, the mean heritage culture retention score on the Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale, on a 5-point Likert-type scale, was 3.47. The mean American culture acquisition score, also on a 5-point Likert-type scale, was 3.90. The fairly high American culture acquisition scores, with the modest Hispanic culture retention scores, suggest that the present sample may have been somewhat acculturated to American values and practices and away from Hispanic values and practices. Such acculturation may have been partially responsible for the moderate familism scores in the present sample. The relatively high levels of acculturation among the Hispanics in the present sample may have been because of the predominance of U.S.-born Hispanics in the sample. In light of projections that fertility will soon outpace immigration as the primary source of growth in the Hispanic population (Day, 1996; Huntington, 2004), that population will likely increasingly consist of second-generation immigrants (i.e., U.S.-born children from immigrant families) such as the majority of Hispanics in the present sample. Therefore, the present sample may represent an important trend in the Hispanic population. Nonetheless, one should not discount the possibility that mean differences might have emerged from a sample of less acculturated Hispanics.

Another potential interpretation, which I discuss in more detail in this article, is that familism is indeed applicable to groups other than Hispanics. For example, in a large and fairly representative sample of Hispanics, Sabogal et al. (1987) found that many components of familism were consistent across levels of acculturation. As a result, those researchers found that even those Hispanics who had been raised without much exposure to Hispanic culture endorsed familism to considerable extents. Combined with the present results, that finding suggests that familism may be applicable to individuals both within and outside of Hispanic culture. The correlations of familism to vertical collectivism and interdependence in the present study suggest that familism may represent somewhat more of a collectivist and interdependent value system in Hispanics than in non-Hispanic Blacks. However, the equivalence of factor structure and the lack of mean differences in familism scores provide countervailing evidence that the construct

of familism, as measured by the Attitudinal Familism Scale, is applicable across ethnic groups.

### *Interpretation of the Present Findings*

The present results suggest that familism may apply to non-Hispanic Whites and to non-Hispanic Blacks as well as to Hispanics. Given that familism represents a collectivist and interdependent value orientation, one would expect it to generalize to other groups (e.g., Asian Americans) whose cultural values are based on collectivist principles (Yeh & Bedford, 2003, 2004). It remains for future researchers to empirically examine the applicability of familism to groups other than those in the present study.

However, it is also important to explore the extent to which familism and other collectivist value orientations, such as communalism and filial piety, represent separate constructs versus overlapping constructs. For example, Unger et al. (2002) found that measures of familism and filial piety were closely interrelated in a multiethnic sample of adolescents. With controls for measurement error, researchers can assume that this correlation (representing the relation between the true constructs) would increase substantially. An examination of the items on the Attitudinal Familism Scale (see Table 2) suggests that some of the items (e.g., "Parents and grandparents should be treated with great respect regardless of their differences in views" and "A person should feel ashamed if something he or she does dishonors the family name") overlap significantly with conceptions of filial piety. Moreover, Kao and Travis (2005) designed a filial piety scale for Hispanics, and the factor structure of participants' responses suggested that filial piety is applicable across ethnic groups as well. With regard to communalism, items from the Attitudinal Familism Scale, such as, "A person should often do activities with his or her immediate and extended families, for example, eat meals, play games, go somewhere together, or work on things together," appear to reflect communalism as well.

Familism, filial piety, and communalism all emphasize respect for family members, sacrificing one's own needs to meet those of one's family and assigning priority to parents and extended family members (Boykin et al., 1997; Sabogal et al., 1987; Yeh & Bedford, 2003, 2004). Indeed, the present results suggest that one can group familism, and perhaps communalism and filial piety as well, under the heading of collectivism (cf. Realo et al., 1997; Schwartz et al., 2006). In particular, *vertical collectivism*, which refers to prioritizing family members and other authority figures above oneself, was especially strongly related to familism in all three ethnic groups. Therefore, it is important for future researchers to address three issues: (a) the extent of interrelations among familism, filial piety, and communalism among diverse ethnic groups, (b) the extent to which these three value orientations can be posited as indicators of a single latent variable (providing an empirical evaluation of the extent to which they refer to

the same underlying set of values), and (c) the correlations between this latent variable and measures of collectivism and interdependence. The magnitudes of these correlations would provide evidence about (a) the degree to which or whether this latent variable may be thought of as representing collectivism and interdependence and (b) whether familism, filial piety, and communalism are redundant with, or add anything beyond, more general indexes of collectivism and interdependence.

Such future research, conducted across ethnic and national groups, would also permit researchers to answer the question of whether value orientations are ethnic-specific at all. For example, although familism was proposed as a Hispanic-specific value orientation, the present results suggest that it applies equally across three American ethnic groups—including (but not limited to) Hispanics. If future research results indicate that the same is true of communalism and filial piety, this pattern of findings might suggest the existence of a smaller set of universal value systems—such as individualism and collectivism—that are represented in different variants within different ethnic or cultural groups. As a result, researchers would be encouraged to measure the same (or similar) value systems across groups, rather than assume that a different set of cultural values applies to each group being examined.

The applicability of familism to non-Hispanic Whites speaks to another important issue in cross-ethnic and cross-cultural research. Theorists originally portrayed individualism and collectivism as opposites (e.g., Hofstede, 1980). This portrayal may carry the implicit assumption that groups designated as *individualist* (e.g., non-Hispanic White Americans) would score quite differently on collectivist values, such as familism, than would groups designated as *collectivist* (e.g., non-Hispanic Blacks and Hispanics). However, more recent research results (Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2001; Matsumoto, 1999; Oyserman et al., 2002) have suggested that individualism and collectivism are in fact independent dimensions and that even individuals and groups identified as individualist (e.g., White Americans) may still endorse collectivist values to some degree. One may take the absence of mean differences in familism dimensions between non-Hispanic Whites and other ethnic groups in the present study, along with Coon and Kemmelmeier's finding that endorsement of collectivism differed only moderately between non-Hispanic Whites and other ethnic groups, as supporting this proposition. A conceptualization of individualism and collectivism as independent dimensions could account for how individualistic and collectivistic groups could score comparably on a collectivist value orientation.

### *Limitations*

The present findings may be preliminary in light of several limitations. First, the sample sizes within the non-Hispanic ethnic groups were small. Small sample sizes not only increase the difficulty of obtaining statistical significance,

but also reduce the precision with which effect sizes can be reliably estimated (Kline, 2004). Second, the present sample did not include some prominent Hispanic groups, such as Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans. The present study may therefore need to be replicated in samples that include members of these groups. Third, the use of a university student sample excluded some segments of the Hispanic population, especially those who do not speak English well or who have not completed formal schooling. This last limitation is especially important because (a) nearly half of Spanish speakers in the United States report speaking English "less than very well" (Shin & Bruno, 2003) and (b) nearly half of all U.S. Hispanics did not graduate high school (Greene & Forster, 2003). As a result, it is possible that the results may have been different with a community sample.

In sum, despite these limitations, the present exploratory study's results suggest that the construct of familism may be applicable across ethnic groups. The reader should acknowledge that the present findings are preliminary and that further research with larger and more diverse samples is necessary to more fully ascertain the applicability of familism across ethnic groups. One might hope that the present study will inspire more research in this direction. In particular, studies with larger samples, a more diverse set of ethnic groups, and data collection across different parts of the United States may help to advance the study of familism across ethnic groups. Moreover, studies including measures of filial piety and communalism, as well as familism, would enable examination of whether these three constructs, which were proposed as referring to specific ethnic groups, are in fact indicators of a construct of higher-order collectivism or interdependence.

#### NOTE

1. This was taken from Angel G. Lugo Steidel and Josefina M. Contreras, *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 25, pp. 312–330. Copyright 2003 by Sage Publications. Reprinted with permission of Sage Publications.

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