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INTRODUCTION

Cultural orientation shapes the experience of social support.

Individualism – values independence, autonomy, and agency.

Collectivism – values interdependence, interconnectedness, and harmony.

➤ **Harmony Collectivism** – preservation of harmony through socio-emotional restraint. Commonly expressed in **Asian** cultural groups.

➤ **Convivial Collectivism** – positive emotionality and approach-orientation. Commonly expressed in **Latinx** cultural groups. (Campos & Kim, 2017)

Implicit support, as a form of emotional comfort gained *without* verbal disclosure of the problem one's problems, has been theorized as being congruent with collectivism with evidence for its benefits among Asians and Asian Americans (Roberts, Bernstein, & Colby, 2016; Yang et al., 2015).

However, **extant research**...

- **heavily relies on quantitative approaches** to assess implicit support – a nuanced, qualitative experience.

- **assumes uniformity across all collectivistic groups** by exclusively comparing Asian and Euro American experiences.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Research Questions:

How is implicit support described and experienced in practice?

- Qualitative methodology allows us to illuminate how implicit support is actually accessed and the cultural variations therein.

Are there cultural differences in how people describe and experience implicit support?

- We contend that implicit support processes may differ between East Asian groups shaped by Harmony Collectivism and Latin American groups shaped by Convivial Collectivism.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS



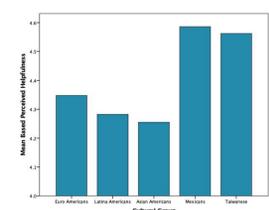
- $N = 516$ women ($M_{age} = 28.39$, $SD = 10.26$, Range = 17 - 72):
 - $n=101$ European American (non-immigrants; $M_{age} = 36.56$, $SD = 13.99$)
 - $n=100$ Latina American (first or second-generation immigrants; $M_{age} = 29.44$, $SD = 13.99$)
 - $n=114$ Asian American (first or second-generation immigrants; $M_{age} = 26.06$, $SD = 7.96$)
 - $n=101$ Mexican (non-immigrants; $M_{age} = 27.28$, $SD = 7.97$)
 - $n=100$ Taiwanese (non-immigrants; $M_{age} = 22.84$, $SD = 4.73$)

PROCEDURE

- Recruitment: using an online crowd-sourcing platform, social media, and university contact. Surveys were back-translated into Spanish and Chinese.
- Prompt: describe a time when you felt supported (upon having a problem or challenge) by the simple presence and time spent with another person **without telling them of the problem itself**.
- Participants assessed how helpful they found the interaction, (on a scale of 1 "not at all" to 5 "extremely").

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Quantitative analysis

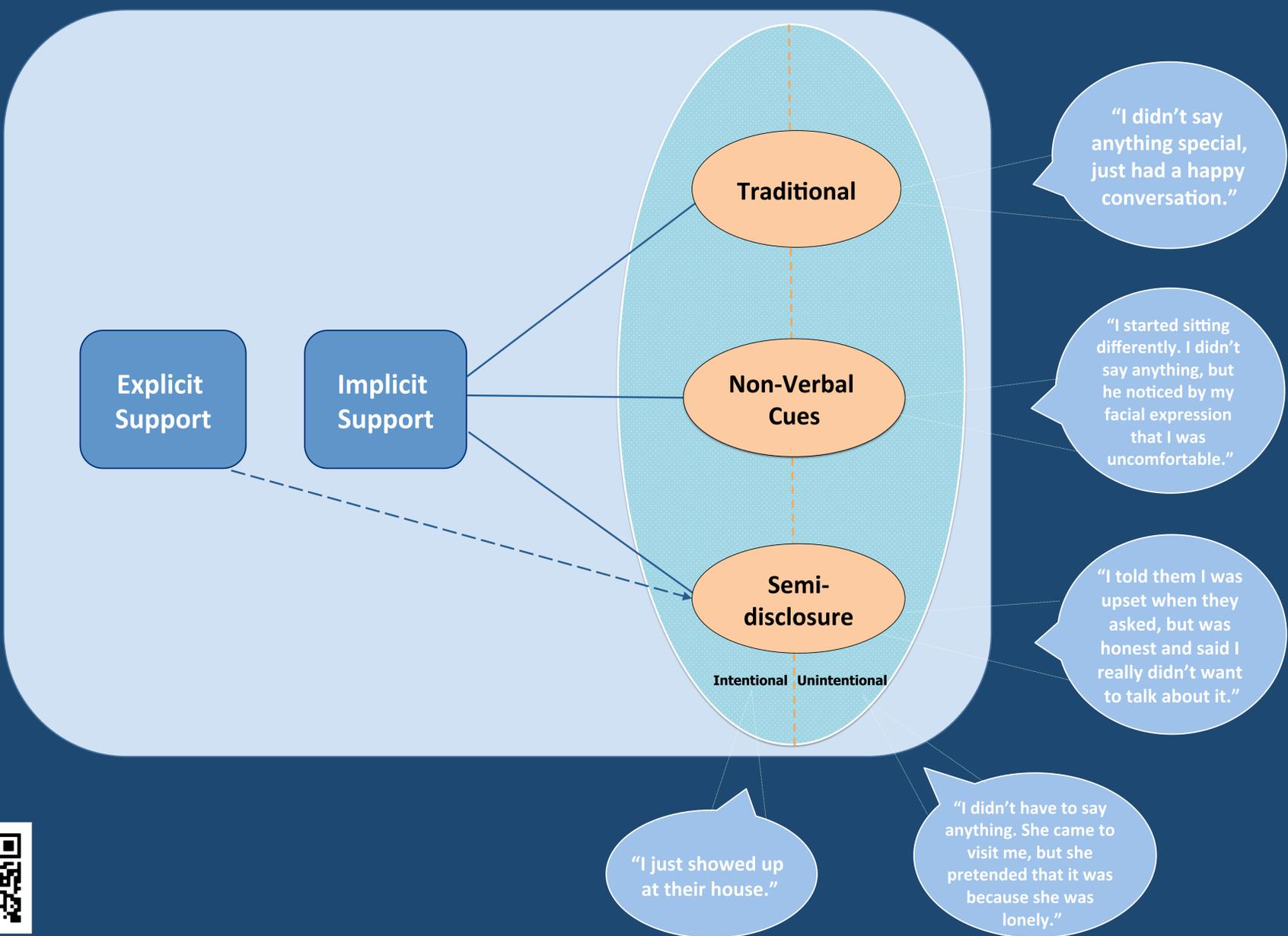


An analysis of variance revealed significant differences in the perceived helpfulness of implicit support between the five cultural groups in our sample.

$$F(4,211) = 2.41, p = 0.05$$



Three kinds of implicit support processes are revealed through qualitative research in the US, Taiwan, and Mexico.



Qualitative analysis

- Our research team used grounded theory techniques to conduct a thematic analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).
- Our coding process included:
 - open-coding to identify patterns in responses
 - meeting with coders and PI to derive categories from these patterns
 - coding all participants with the new categories and meeting to discuss discrepancies and refine the categories as needed
 - Using patterns to propose a new theoretical model for support

Cultural Patterns

Three Support Themes

Traditional Implicit Support – Time spent together without acknowledgement or disclosure of the problem.

Semi-Disclosure – Participant verbally expresses that there is a problem but that they do not intend nor want to disclose more.

Non-verbal cues – Participant does not verbally disclose anything, but does express a change in demeanor, facial expression, or other non-verbal cue that the support provider picked up on.

Salience of Explicit Support

Despite instructions to write about an implicit support-based event, nearly half of our sample wrote about explicit support.

"I talked about problems I was facing... they offered advice." – 28-year-old Latina American woman

Implicit support may be more difficult to recall/conceptualize, due to its often invisible nature, while explicit support may be more memorable, fitting people's schemata for social support.

Benefits of implicit support

All participants described implicit support as beneficial, "satisfying" and "relieving," challenging previous conceptions that implicit support may be harmful to certain cultural groups.

Non-Verbal Cues: High Context vs Low Context

MX, LA, and AA all described subtle changes in demeanor that prompted support from their partner.

"I looked him directly in the eyes. They looked at me and held my hand. That air of comprehension." – 23-year-old Mexican woman

Characteristic of high-context – often collectivistic – cultures, in which meaning is expressed through context cues, rather than words themselves. Meanwhile... Euro Americans largely talked about the lack of talking.

"Nothing was said, just sat in silence. I was obviously upset about something." – 31-year-old European American woman

Commonly seen in low-context westernized groups, in which meaning is attached to what is *said* rather than implied or expressed.

Mexican Group Patterns

- Highest proportion of *non-verbal cues* compared to all other groups. Congruent with convivial collectivism, which values physical expressiveness and positive emotionality – may manifest itself in non-verbal expressions.
- Highest proportion of *explicit support* and extremely small proportion of *semi-disclosure-based interactions*. May be a higher tendency for disclosure within convivial collectivism, when social interactions revolve around sharing *chisme* (gossip).

Taiwanese Group Patterns

- Highest proportion of *traditional implicit support descriptions*. Traditional implicit support may be (a) more salient in non-Westernized collectivistic societies and (b) more culturally congruent with harmony collectivism, which is typically embodied by Asian cultural groups.
- Smallest proportion of *semi-disclosure-based and explicit support descriptions*. Traditional implicit support likely falls under Asians' schema for social support. Thus, more Taiwanese individuals correctly followed and understood the prompt, understanding (and likely having experienced) the notion of feeling supported *without* any form of disclosure.

IMPACT AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Our study adds to the prior work on implicit support by closely examining **everyday implicit support experiences**.
- Our **qualitative approach** reveals nuance and depth regarding how implicit support is accessed that was not captured by prior definitions.
- We examined different support patterns linked with **different forms of collectivism**, emphasizing **Asian and Latino** forms of collectivism.
- The current research not only highlights the benefit of qualitative methodologies to better understand under-explored support processes, but also the importance of expanding the study of collectivism to a broader range of cultural groups.