

Does Inclusion of the Other in the Self Moderate the Effects of Received Support?

Clare Bradley, Katherine Zee, & Niall Bolger
Columbia University

Introduction

Perception of Social Support

- Perceiving that social support is available from close others has been shown to be crucial for personal wellness, both mental and physical.
- However, social support that is actually received does not always benefit recipients.

Benefits of Self-Other Overlap

- IOS is a reliable measure of the subjective closeness of relationships and describes the cognitive significance of being in a close relationship in terms of including other in the self.
- Depending on how much a partner is perceived as part of one's self, allocation of resources is shared (because benefiting other is benefiting self), perspective differences are reduced, and other's characteristics become one's own.
- Self-other overlap has been shown to correlate with increased investment in relationships.
- Forms of support (e.g. invisible support) that involve blurring distinctions between the roles of provider and recipient are often effective.

Research Question

Does the effectiveness of the practical and/or emotional support received depend on how much recipients include the support provider in their sense of self?

Hypotheses

Support receipt leading up to a laboratory stressor will interact with self-other overlap (inclusion of other in the self; IOS) to predict (a) stressor appraisals and (b) cardiovascular stress responses.

Method

Participants: 110 friend dyads ($N = 220$ individuals)

- All participants were university students.

Laboratory Support Discussion Paradigm:

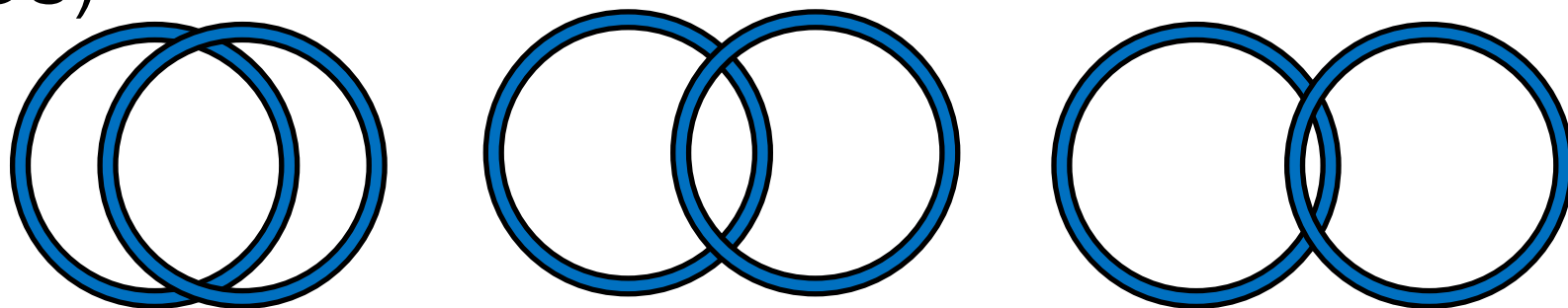
- Friend dyads participated together.
- One partner (recipient) was randomly assigned to undergo a laboratory stressor (a stressful speech task).
- Dyads completed a 5-min social support discussion in anticipation of the speech.
 - Recipients shared their thoughts and feelings about the speech.
 - The other partner (provider) gave emotional and practical support.
- Sharer completed questionnaire after support discussion about amount of practical and emotional support received, inclusion of other in the self (IOS), and stressor appraisals.
- Sharer gave speech and had their cardiovascular reactivity recorded.

Predictors:

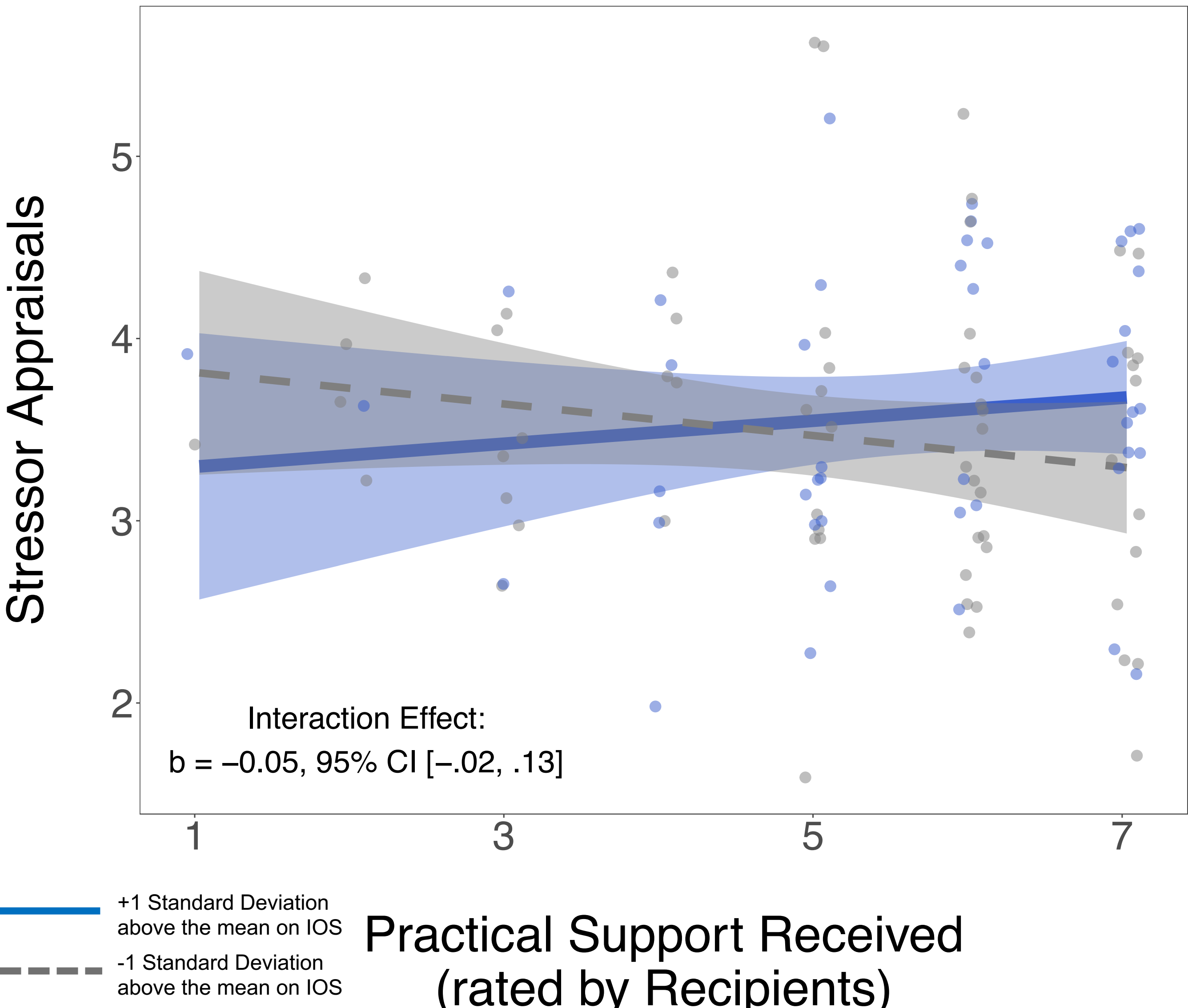
- Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS)
 - Range of 7 pairs
- Practical Support Receipt
 - "During the conversation, how much practical help (e.g., advice, suggestions of courses of action, offers of direct assistance) did your partner provide?"
 - Range of 1-7 (1 = Not at all, 7 = Extremely)

Dependent Variables:

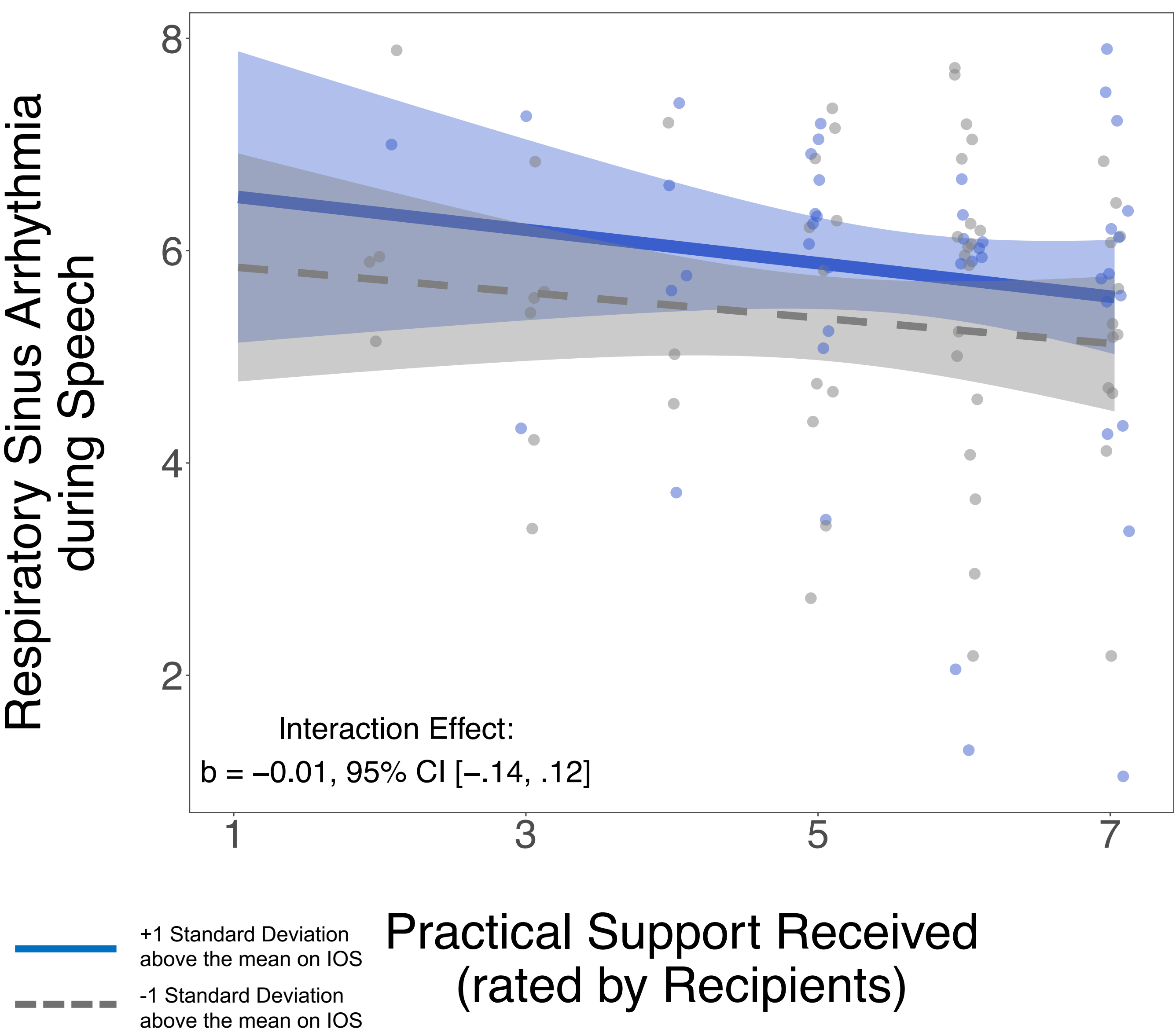
- Stressor appraisals (measured after predictor variables but before the speech)
 - 8 items total, range of 1-7 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)
 - "The upcoming task is very demanding."
 - "The upcoming task is very stressful."
- Cardiovascular reactivity during start of speech, specifically respiratory sinus arrhythmia (RSA), a measure of parasympathetic control
 - RSA typically decreases under conditions of stress



The Interaction of Practical Support Receipt and IOS on Stressor Appraisals



The Interaction of Practical Support Receipt and IOS on Respiratory Sinus Arrhythmia

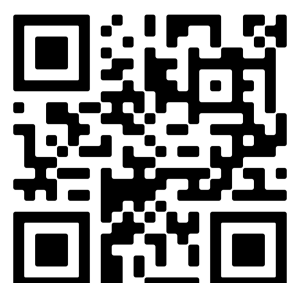


Analysis Strategy

Multiple linear regression predicting each DV as a function of practical support, IOS, and their interaction.

RSA reactivity was operationalized as the first observation during the speech (30-seconds), controlling for baseline RSA.

Analysis plan was preregistered on OSF:



Results

- Higher practical support receipt was not significantly related to stressor appraisals or physiological reactivity, nor did IOS interact with support receipt to predict these outcomes.
- However, higher IOS was marginally significantly related to better physiological stress responses (higher RSA, reflecting less stress reactivity).

Discussion

Implications

- Results do not provide evidence for a significant interaction of IOS and received practical support predicting stressor appraisals or stressor reactivity.
- Further research is needed to understand the link between self-other overlap and support receipt.
- Further research should also examine effects of IOS on physiological stress responses.

Future Directions

- Test for potential interactions of IOS and received support using other methods (e.g. daily diary) and types of relationship partners (e.g. romantic relationships)
- Run additional studies with larger sample sizes
- Examine whether IOS moderates effects of support receipt as reported by providers and third-party coders, rather than recipients

References

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Contact Information: c.bradley@columbia.edu