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UNDERSTANDING MECHANISMS BEHIND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN HELP SEEKING PROPENSITY

By Josephine Juanamarga

Cultural psychological researches have consistently proved that Caucasians are individualists who prioritize autonomic success whereas Asians are collectivists who encourage interpersonal harmony in addition to being interdependent on their in-group, whom they depend for validation of shared norms.[1] Studies of within-culture ethnic differences have also found that contrary to Caucasian Americans, Asian Americans also encourage in-group success and family integrity.[2] Furthermore, Asians are shown to have overall higher general trust toward others than compared to Caucasians,[3] which would seem to suggest a higher help-seeking propensity. However, this does not seem to be the case. Despite the fact that studies report receiving support minimizes distress,[4] previous clinical psychological studies have found that Asian Americans

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1   Hazel R. Markus and Shinobu Kitayama, *Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion and motivation* (Psychological Review, 1991), 224-253; Harry C. Triandis, *Cross-cultural studies of individualism and collectivism* (In J. Berman (Ed.) paper presented at Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, 1989); Steven J. Heine and colleagues, *Is there a universal need for positive self-regard* (Psychological Review, 1999), 766-794.

2   Daphna Oyserman, Heather M. Coon and Markus Kemmelmeier, *Rethinking individualism and collectivism: Evaluation of theoretical assumptions and meta-analyses* (Psychological Bulletin, 2002), 3-72.

3   Steven J. Heine, *Self as cultural product: An examination of East Asian and North American selves* (Journal of Personality, 2001), 881-906.

4   Brant R. Burleson, *The experience and effects of emotional support: What the study of cultural and gender differences can tell us about close relationships, emotion, and interpersonal communication* (Personal Relationships, 2003), 1-23; Michael R. Cunningham and Anita P. Barbee, *Social support* (In C. Hendrick & S. S. Hendrick (Eds.), Close relationships: A sourcebook, 2000), 272-285; Teresa E. Seeman, *How do others get under our skin?* (In C. D. Ryff & B. H. Singer (Eds.), Emotion, social relationships, and health, 2001), 189-210; David Spiegel and Rachel Kimerling, *Group psychotherapy for women with breast cancer: Relationships among social support, emotional expression, and survival* (In C. D. Ryff & B. H. Singer (Eds.), Emotion, social relationships, and health, 2001), 97-123.

are less likely to seek professional mental help than Westerners,[5] even in times of distress.[6]

    Nonetheless, because a person's cultural orientation – the social norms, roles, beliefs and values they adhere to—greatly influences their understanding of social relationships and how they are expected to behave,[7] it is important to consider how cultural factors like ethnicity and the dominant communication style of a particular ethnic group might influence the extent to which a person is more or less likely to seek help. Researchers have argued that cultural values and attitudes underlying the subjective sense of a person's group membership or identity define a person's ethnicity, not their racial belonging.[8] One way that ethnic group belonging can be examined is through the dominant communication style of a culture. While high-context cultures emphasize conveying one's intention through a nonverbal indirect manner, low context cultures emphasize conveying one's intention through an explicit manner that discounts the effort of the listener to interpret the situation.[9]

    The current study aims to examine the propensity of help-seeking behaviors in Asian Americans by assessing three elements of the process– the willingness to seek help, comfort level when seeking help, and the expectations to benefit from others' help for problems encountered

5   Jennifer Abe-Kim and colleagues, *Use of mental health-related services among immigrant and US-born Asian Americans: Results from the national Latino and Asian American study* (American Journal of Public Health, 2007), 91-98; Stanley Sue and colleagues, *Community mental health services for ethnic minority groups: A test of the cultural responsiveness hypothesis* (Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1991), 533-540.

6   Oliver, J.M. Oliver and colleagues, *Students' self-reports of help seeking: The impact of psychological problems, stress, and demographic variables on utilization of formal and informal support* (Social Behavior and Personality, 1999), 109-128; Jinah K. Shin, *Help-seeking behaviors by Korean immigrants for depression* (Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 2002), 416-476.

7   Xenia Chryssochoou, *Cultural diversity: Its social psychology* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 217; Harry Triandis and colleagues, *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1980).

8   Jean S. Phinney, *When we talk about American ethnic groups, what do we mean?* (American Psychologist, 1996), 918-927; Hector Betancourt and Steven Regeser Lopez, *The study of culture, ethnicity, and race in American psychology* (American Psychologist, 1993), 629-637; Shelley E. Taylor and colleagues, *Culture and social support: Who seeks it and why?* (Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2004), 354-362.

9   Edward T. Hall, *Beyond culture* (New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday,1976); Min-Sun Kim, William F. Sharkey and Theodore M. Singelis, *The relationship between individuals' self construals and perceived importance of interactive constraints* (International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 1994), 117-140.

in quotidian domains such as personal emotional distress, relational problems, spiritual conflict, and financial difficulties. In doing so, I will examine possible underlying mechanisms that operate within a cultural context—notably ethnicity, communication style and implicit feelings or underlying subjective sense of power. This study will also explore possible cultural differences in selectively seeking potential sources of support, like family members and close friends as opposed to less familiar career-driven connections like teachers, bosses and colleagues. Hence, I propose the following hypotheses. First, ethnicity will directly influence one's overall help-seeking propensity. Second, communication style will moderate effects of ethnicity on help-seeking. Third, implicit power will also moderate ethnic differences in help-seeking. Fourth, selective preference for seeking potential sources of help-givers will be moderated by communication style and implicit power.

I. Method

A. Participants

A total of 305 UC Berkeley (UCB) Caucasian and Asian students as well as 195 Tsinghua University (TU) Asian students from were recruited through their school's respective Psychology Department Research Participation Program (RPP).[10] Participants were divided into 2 groups based on their self-identified ethnicity (Caucasians vs. Asian Americans vs. Asians), communication styles (high vs. low context cultures), and random placement in power priming groups (high or low implicit power conditions). Participants who completed the entire online study (40-45 minutes) were reimbursed with 1 RPP credit.

B. Materials

A questionnaire was made by compiling 1. a context communication scale – to assess the participants' dominant style of communication,[11] 2. a completed modified Eysenck personality questionnaire indicating

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10   Refer to appendix C for more detailed demographics
11   Hall, *Beyond Culture*, 1976; Donghoon Kim, Yigang Pan and Heung Soo Park, *High- versus low-context culture: A comparison of Chinese, Korean and American cultures* (Psychology and Marketing, 1998), 507-521.

introversion or extroversion,[12] 3. a rejection sensitivity questionnaire that assesses participants who are hypervigilant to cues of potential rejection by others,[13] 4. help-seeking scenarios and questions used to assess help-seeking propensity across relational problems, emotional distress, personal spiritual conflict and financial difficulties,[14] and 5. implicit power scenarios that served to prime participants with subjective feelings of powerfulness or powerlessness.[15]

C. Procedure

Once participants had read the study information and signed the online consent form, they were asked to fill out the aforementioned questionnaires starting with context communication scale, personality and rejection sensitivity questionnaires, followed by implicit power priming with help-seeking scenarios and questions last. Demographic information was also collected.

II. Results

3 X 2 multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze 1. ethnicity X implicit power and 2. ethnicity X context communication style as independent variables separately. Introversion/extroversion and rejection sensitivity scores were analyzed as covariance to control for individual differences in personality. Dependent variables were three dimensions of help-seeking and selective preference for potential help-givers. Cronbach's alpha was use to analyze inter-item reliability among the three dimensions of help-seeking: willingness, comfort and expected level of benefitting from help (Cronbach's α = .912)[16].

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12   Hans Jürgen Eysenck and Sybil B. G. Eysenck, *Manual of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire* (London: Hodder & Stoughton ,1975); David A. Grayson, *Latent trait analysis of the Eysenck personality questionnaire* (Journal Psychiatry Research, 1986), 217-235.
13   Geraldine Downey and Scott I. Feldman, *Implications of rejection sensitivity for intimate relationships* (Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1996), 1327-1343.
14   refer to appendix A for help-seeking scenarios
15   refer to appendix B for implicit power priming scenarios
16   Cronbach alpha (α) is a measure of internal consistency, or how closely related a set of items are as a group. A "high" value of alpha (a minimum .80) is often used along with substantive arguments and possibly other statistical measures, as evidence that the items accurately measure an underlying construct or variable that it is supposed to measure.

A. Main effects of ethnicity on overall help-seeking propensity

Ethnicity was a significant predictor of help-seeking across all dimensions such that compared to the two ethnic groups from UCB, Asian students from TU indicated the highest willingness to seek help (N= 195, M= 2.94, SD = .618), F(2, 478) = 13.05, p<.001, reported feeling the most comfort seeking others' help (M= 2.83, SD = .645), F(2, 478) = 5.95, p=.003 and the highest expectation of benefiting from others' help (M = 3.23, SD = .765), F(2, 478) = 4.37, p=.013.[17] Post-hoc analysis using Tukey's HSD[18] showed that Asian students from TU significantly differed from both Asian American and Caucasian students (p=.001) but there were no differences between two ethnic groups from UCB (p>.05). However, when analyzed across scenarios, ethnicity only predicted different help-seeking when dealing with three scenarios (Cronbach's α= .817). In contrast to the two ethnic groups from UCB, Asian students from TU indicated that they were more likely to seek help in response to *relational problem* (N= 195, M= 2.39, SD= .866), F(2, 478) = 11.45, p<.001, *emotional distress* (M= 2.97, SD= .772), F(2, 478) = 13.71, p<.001, and *personal religious conflict* (M= 3.17, SD= .825), F(2, 478) = 5.00, p=.007.[19] Post-hoc Tukey's HSD showed that TU's Asian students significantly differed from both Asian American and Caucasian students across the three scenarios (p=.001) but there was no difference between the two ethnic groups from UCB (p>.05). No significant differences were found among all three ethnic groups in response to seeking help to resolve financial difficulties, F(2, 478) = .798, p>.05.

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17   refer to figure 1 at appendix for illustration; note: "N" refers to the number of participant belonging to a certain group i.e. Asians from TU or Asian Americans from UCB or Caucasians from UCB; "M" refers to the group mean or arithmetic average; "SD" refers to the group's standard deviation or extent of dispersion of scores from the mean; "F" refers to the degree of difference in the dependent variable created by the independent variable, partly determined by the degrees of freedom (indicated in parentheses); the "p" value indicate the level of statistical significance difference in the dependent variable produced by the independent variables (p-value must be lower than .05 in order for variable to be significant).

18   Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) is usually used in conjunction with multiple analyses of variance (after finding significant differences) in order to determine which groups in the sample differ.

19   refer to figure 2 at appendix for illustration

B. Interaction effects of context communication and ethnicity on overall help-seeking propensity

Context communication style was a significant moderator of ethnicity in predicting help-seeking in two dimensions: willingness to seek help and comfort level during help-seeking (Cronbach's α= .852). Asian students from TU who were low-context communicators reported the highest level of willingness to seek others' help (N= 126, M= 2.27, SD= .824), $F(2,475) = 9.17$, $p<.001$ as well as the highest level of comfort when seeking others for help (M= 2.52, SD= .744), $F(2,475) = 7.17$, $p=.001$.[20] Post-hoc Tukey's HSD revealed no significant difference between UCB Asian American and Caucasian students regardless of their context communication style ($p>.05$), but TU's Asian students were significantly different from the other two groups ($p=.001$). The level of expectation that an individual hopes to benefit from others' help was not a significant factor in predicting how context communication moderates cultural differences in help-seeking propensity ($p>.05$).

C. Interaction effects of context communication and ethnicity on selective preference for potential help-givers

Context communication style only significantly moderated cultural differences in selective preference toward career-driven connections such that TU's Asian students who were low-context communicators were the most likely group to seek help from their teachers, bosses and subordinates (N= 126, M= 2.59, SD= .724) while UCB Asian American students who were low-context communicators indicated the least preference doing so (N= 59, M= 2.01, SD= .567), $F(2,475) = 7.61$, $p= .001$.[21] Post-hoc Tukey's HSD showed that there were no significant differences between Asian American and Caucasian students from UCB ($p>.05$). In contrast, context-communication was not a significant moderator in cultural differences for selective preference to seek personally-driven connections among all three ethnic groups ($p>.05$).

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20   refer to table 2 at appendix for descriptive statistics of interaction between context-communication and ethnicity

21   refer to figure 3 at appendix for illustration

D. Interaction effects of implicit power and ethnicity on overall help-seeking propensity [22]

Implicit power was a significant moderator of ethnicity in predicting help-seeking across all dimensions (Cronbach's α = .741). UCB's Caucasian students indicated the highest willingness to seek help when primed with high implicit power (N= 65, M= 3.83, SD= .672), $F_{(2,475)} = 4.84$, p=.008 but reported the highest level of expectation of benefiting from others' help when primed with low implicit power (M= 3.59, SD= 1.08), $F_{(2,475)} = 5.74$, p=.003. Post-hoc Tukey's HSD showed that the significant differences were between: 1. UCB's Caucasian and Asian American students (p= .041) for willingness to seek help, and 2. Asian students from TU and Caucasian students from UCB (p= .036) for level of expectation of benefiting from others' help. Nonetheless, Asian students from TU who were primed with high implicit power indicated the highest level of comfort when seeking help from others (N= 85, M= 2.48, SD= 1.03) while Caucasian students from UCB who were primed with high implicit power indicated the lowest help-seeking comfort (M=1.78, SD=1.19), $F_{(2,475)} = 4.43$, p=.012. Post hoc Tukey's HSD revealed that only Asian students from TU significantly differed from the other two ethnic groups from UCB, Asian Americans (p=.026) and Caucasians (p=.015).

E. Interaction effects of implicit power and ethnicity on selective preference for potential help-givers

Implicit power only significantly moderates cultural differences in selective preference toward career-driven connections such that Asian students from TU who were primed with high implicit power indicated greater preference to seek help from bosses or colleagues (N= 85, M= 2.48, SD= 1.03) while Caucasian students from UCB who were primed with high implicit power showed the least preference of doing so (N= 65, M= 1.77, SD= 1.19), $F_{(2,475)} = 4.43$, p=.012.[23] Tukey's HSD post-hoc analysis revealed that Asian students from TU was significantly different from UCB's Asian American students (p= .026) and Caucasian students (p =.015).

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22   refer to table 3 at appendix for descriptive statistics of interaction between implicit power and ethnicity

23   refer to figure 4 at appendix for illustration

III. Discussions

Previous help-seeking studies that focused on cultural differences between Asians and Caucasians have mostly focused on professional mental health domain[24] and examined possibilities why Asian Americans are less likely to seek help. This is the first study attempting to reconcile conflicting clinical and cultural psychological research by examining cultural differences in help-seeking propensity across multiple contexts in daily life in addition to mental health issues using three dimensions of help-seeking.[25] None of the previous studies examined how cultural factors like context communication style or implicit power priming might moderate ethnic differences in help-seeking. This is also the first study that probed into whether Asian Americans' lesser propensity of help-seeking is influenced to an extent by their selective preference for seeking potential help-givers.

Results showed that hypothesis 1 was supported. Ethnicity directly influenced one's overall help-seeking propensity such that TU's Asian students indicated the highest overall help-seeking propensity compared to the other two ethnic groups across the three scenarios of relational problems, emotional distress and personal religious conflict. Contrary to previous literatures that document Asian Americans' overall lesser help-seeking propensity compared to Caucasians, I found no difference in overall help-seeking propensity of Asian American vs. Caucasian students who were both from UCB. I speculate that Asian Americans' lack of help-seeking is not domain-specific since they were equally less likely to seek help across scenarios regardless of personal issue (emotional or spiritual) or relationships. Instead, this might be due

24   Abe-Kim et al., *Use of mental health-related services among immigrant and US-born Asian Americans*, 2007; Sue et al., *Community mental health services for ethnic minority groups: A test of the cultural responsiveness hypothesis*,1991; Shin, *Help-seeking behaviors by Korean immigrants for depression*, 2002; Amy Y. Zhang, Lonnie R. Snowden & Stanley Sue, *Differences between Asian and White Americans' help seeking and utilization patterns in the Los Angeles area* (Journal of Community Psychology, 1998), 317-326.
25   Niall Bolger, Adam Zuckerman and Ronald C. Kessler, *Invisible support and adjustment to stress* (Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2000), 267-283; Taylor et al., *Culture and social support: Who seeks it and why*, 2004; Liang et al., *Culture, control and coping: New perspectives on social support*, 1994; Nico H. Frijda, Peter Kuipers and Elisabeth ter Schure, *Relations among emotion, appraisal, and emotional action readiness* (Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1989), 212-228.

to sociological barriers that placed Asian Americans at a disadvantaged position compared to Caucasians, like the lack of fellow Asian mental health professionals to cater to their cultural-specific needs.

Hypothesis 2 was also supported. Firstly, context communication style moderated ethnic differences on help-seeking propensity such that TU's Asian students who were low-context communicators reported the highest willingness to seek others' help and felt most comfortable seeking others' help. However, I found no difference in overall help-seeking propensity of UCB's Asian American vs. Caucasian students regardless of their context communication styles. I assume that this could be because Asian American students from UCB regardless of their context communication style, underwent extreme cultural changes in order to successfully acculturate into their host culture; therefore, they resemble their individualistic Caucasian peers who are known to emphasize the importance of showing outward display of success and discourage outward display of weakness (i.e. seeking help).

However, hypothesis 3 was partially supported. Implicit power moderated ethnic differences on help-seeking propensity such that UCB's Caucasian students indicated the highest help-seeking willingness when primed with high implicit power, but the highest expectation of benefiting from others' help when primed with low implicit power. Yet it was TU's Asian students primed with high implicit power who indicated that they felt the highest level of comfort when seeking help. I postulated that an internalization of high power can drive help-seeking efforts through minimizing discomfort (i.e. feelings of "burden" and guilt of troubling the other person) for Asians who very much prioritize their in-group relations above personal needs, goals and desires. On the other hand, signaling a need for help for Caucasian Americans meant greater discomfort because asking others for help reduced the implicit feelings of prestige associated with having high power.

Finally, hypothesis 4 was supported. Context communication style only significantly moderated ethnic differences in selective preference toward seeking career-driven connections but not personally-driven relations for help such that TU's Asian students who were low-context communicators were the most likely group to seek help from their teachers, bosses and subordinates. Implicit power, on the other hand only significantly moderated ethnic differences in selective preference toward seeking career-driven connections but not personally-driven

relations for help such that TU's Asian students who were primed with high implicit power were the most likely group to seek help from their boss and colleagues. I assumed that the results pertaining to this are not the simply due to the effect of priming but that it reflected participants' internalized implicit power, as proved by statistics.

The results of this study have shown that help-seeking tendencies of Caucasians, Asians, and Asian Americans are very different. This study showed that Asian Americans, as a bicultural group, are psychologically distinct perhaps due to having to undergo extensive acculturation stresses such that they were better at integrating as well as differentiating between competing Asian and American cultural perspectives.[26] Thus I postulate that their help-seeking tendencies are not influenced by domain-specific reasons and they are less likely to seek help only in a professional mental health domain. Instead, the lack of help-seeking among Asian Americans may be due to several psychological barriers, such as availability of fellow Asian mental health professionals that cater to their specific cultural needs.[27] Furthermore, Asians' tendency to selecting career-driven connections for help was increased if they were low-context communicators or felt implicitly powerful. This could be because it would be more advantageous for Asians to seek help from someone outside of their inner circle because 1. they can obtain much more novel, perhaps useful information according to the Strength of Weak Ties theory which, posits that it is sometimes more advantageous to have more weak ties or distant networks rather than strong ties[28], and 2. they can receive the help they need without having to potentially disrupt the in-group harmony through burdening others with one's personal problems.[29]

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26   Carmit T. Tadmor, Philip E. Tetlock and Kaiping Peng, *Acculturation strategies and integrative complexity: The cognitive implications of biculturalism* (Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 2009), 105-139.

27   David T. Takeuchi, Stanley Sue and May Yeh, *Rates and outcomes from ethnicity-specific mental health programs in Los Angeles* (American Journal of Public Health, 1995), 638-643; Zhang et al., *Differences between Asian and White Americans' help-seeking and utilization patterns in the Los Angeles area*, 1998.

28   Granovetter, *The strength of weak ties*, 1973.

29   Taylor et al., *Culture and social support: Who seeks it and why*, 2004; Evelyn Lee, *Asian American families: An overview* (In M. McGoldrick, J. Giordano, & J. K. Pearce (Eds.), Ethnicity and family therapy, 2nd ed., 1996), 227-248; Liang et al., *Culture, control and coping: New perspectives on social support*, 1994; Frijda et al., *Relations among emotion, appraisal, and emotional action readiness*, 1989.

Future studies should more closely investigate whether sociological barrier such as lack of fellow Asian mental health professionals might be the real cause behind lack of help-seeking among Asian Americans. Apart from mental health fields, future studies could investigate the actual help-seeking behavioral tendencies and efforts taken by help-seekers of different ethnic groups through observations or diary reports in order to obtain a more accurate analysis of actual behavior.

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Appendix

A. Help-seeking scenarios

1. Relational problem

You ask your significant other (partner) with whom you have 3 years relationship, out for a special date this Sunday because the both of you have not have time to devote to each other lately due to busy schedules. Your significant other (partner) agreed but seemed disinterested in the idea. Throughout the whole date, your significant other (partner) seemed distracted and kept looking at their cell phone. You began to suspect that your significant other (partner) has intimate relations with another person. However, you had no way of knowing this because you are not familiar with the people your significant other (partner) hangs out with. You are now very curious and desperate to know if your significant other (partner) is disloyal to you.

2. Emotional distress

You felt that nothing in life really interests you anymore. Others noted how gloomy you looked as if you have not slept for days. You dislike your previously-enjoyed hobbies and resent socializing and mingling with people. Recently, you have felt tired and fatigued. You have been very troubled and stressed about this for almost a year now.

3. Financial difficulties

Your employer has just fired you and several other workers at your company. This job is your only primary income. You checked your savings and found that you only have enough to support yourself for another month before you become bankrupt. You are desperately looking for another job through to recoup your financial loss. You have applied to more than one hundred companies but none have called you in for an interview. You tried to borrow a loan from the bank but were rejected because you do not fulfill the requirements.

4. Personal spiritual conflict

You are a person of religiosity. You have been very active in participating in religious processions. You know your fellow religious leaders well

and sometimes you even ask them for consultation regarding matters of your own faith. However, a religious leader in another country embezzles funds and engages in corruption. Yet more and more news surfaced documenting the unreasonable acts of religious leaders conflicting with your faith. You were extremely distressed by these facts and these incidents cause you to slowly lose your religious belief. You are feeling very conflicted as to what you should do.

B. Implicit power priming scenarios

1. High power

You are a new student in a school and this year you are currently taking a class you were interested in. However, the test materials have been so challenging that you only managed to get C's on every test. Since you heard that the teacher is very demanding and strict, you decided that it is okay to get by with C's as long as you still pass the class. Unexpectedly, you failed your final exam. As you reflected upon your failures, you recalled that most of the questions on the exam came from sources that were not even covered in class lectures or readings. You asked your classmates and found out they all did worse than expected. Because of this, you felt dissatisfied and decided to file a complaint to the dean about this teacher. You also collected signatures from other students in your class who also felt that the teacher gave unfair exam questions. Eventually, the dean approved your complaints, issuing a letter to the teacher to drop the final exam grade for the whole class. Consequently, you pass the class.

2. Low power

You are a new student in a school and this year you are currently taking a class you were interested in. However, the test materials have been so challenging that you only managed to get C's on every test. Since you heard that the teacher is very demanding and strict, you decided that it is okay to get by with C's as long as you still pass the class. Unexpectedly, you failed your final exam. As you reflected upon your failures, you recalled that most of the questions on the exam came from sources that were not even covered in class lectures or readings. You asked your classmates and found out they all did worse than expected. Because of this, you felt dissatisfied and decided to file a complaint to

the dean about this teacher. You also collected signatures from other students in your class who also felt that the teacher gave unfair exam questions. In the end, the dean ignored your complaints, defending the teacher. Consequently, you fail the class.

C. Participant demographics

The sample consisted of diverse age range from 17 to 46 years (M = 21years, SD = 2.84 years). There were 136 males and 169 females from UC Berkeley; 80 males and 118 females from Tsinghua University that come

FIGURE I

MAIN EFFECTS OF ETHNICITY
ON DIMENSIONS OF HELP-SEEKING
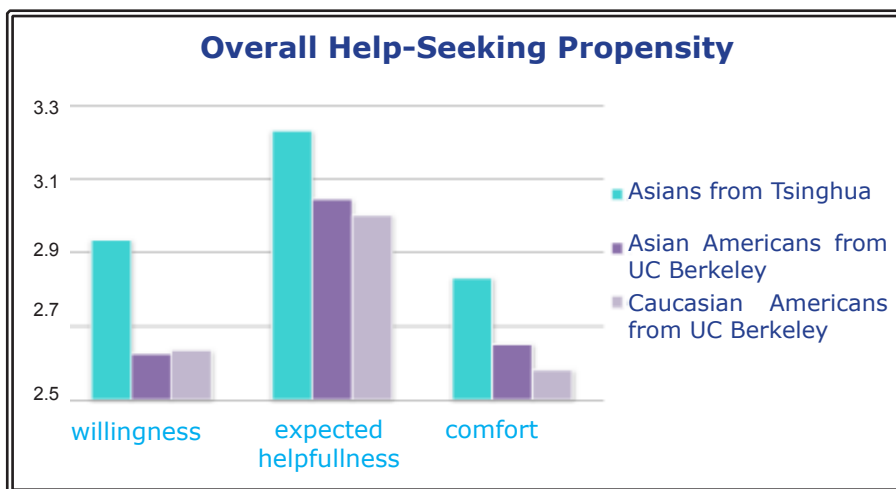
Graph shows that Asian students from Tsinghua University indicated the highest willingness to seek help (N= 195, M= 2.94, SD = .618), $F(2, 478) = 13.05$, ***$p<$ .001, reported feeling the most comfort seeking others' help (M= 2.83, SD = .645), $F(2, 478) = 5.95$, **$p= .003$ and indicated the highest expectation of benefiting from others' help (M = 3.23, SD = .765), $F(2, 478) = 4.37$, *$p= .013$.

from very diverse ethnic backgrounds: Westerners/Caucasians (36% born in U.S.; 12% born outside of U.S. in countries like France, Ireland, Russia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Armenian and Uzbekistan) vs. East and Southeast Asians (33% born in U.S.; 17% born outside of U.S. in countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Philippines, Vietnam, and Burma) as well as East Asians (97% born in China; 3% born outside China in countries like Taiwan, Japan, Korean) from China. *The remaining 2% and 3% of participants from UC Berkeley and Tsinghua University respectively, who indicated that they are of a mixed ethnicity, were excluded from the analysis.

FIGURE II

Main effects of ethnicity on help-seeking across scenarios
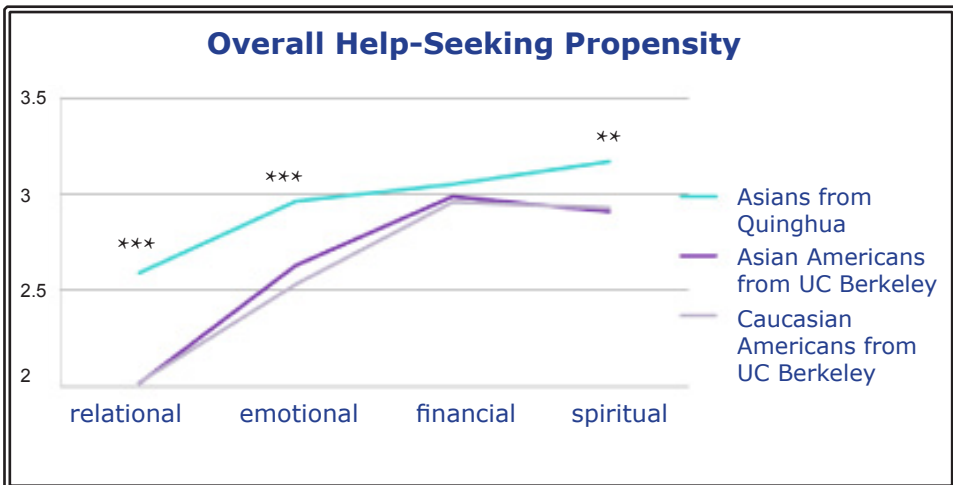

Figure above shows that Asian students from Tsinghua University indicated that they were more likely to seek help in response to relational problem (N= 195, M= 2.39, SD= .866), F(2, 478) = 11.45, ***p< .001; emotional distress (M= 2.97, SD= .772), F(2, 478) = 13.71, ***p< .001; and personal religious conflict (M= 3.17, SD= .825), F(2, 478) = 5.00, **p= .007.

TABLE I

Interaction between Ethnicity and Communication style on help-seeking descriptive statistics

Help-seeking Dimension	M	SD	F	Sig.
willingness level			9.17	.000***
Asians from Tsinghua				
high-context communicators (n=69)	2.10	0.96		
low-context communicators (n=126)	2.27	0.82		
Asian Americans from UC Berkeley				
high-context communicators (n=88)	2.09	1.04		
low-context communicators (n=59)	1.47	0.70		
Caucasians from UC Berkeley				
high-context communicators (n=66)	1.78	0.81		
low-context communicators (n=73)	1.86	0.84		
comfort level			7.17	.001***
Asians from Tsinghua				
high-context communicators (n=69)	2.33	0.84		
low-context communicators (n=126)	2.52	0.74		

	M	SD	F	Sig
Asian Americans from UC Berkeley				
high-context communicators (n=88)	2.31	0.91		
low-context communicators (n=59)	1.81	0.61		
Caucasians from UC Berkeley				
high-context communicators (n=66)	2.15	0.86		
low-context communicators (n=73)	1.94	0.87		
level of expected helpfulness			9.98	.000***
Asians from Tsinghua				
high-context communicators (n=69)	2.79	0.72		
low-context communicators (n=126)	3.06	0.76		
Asian Americans from UC Berkeley				
high-context communicators (n=88)	2.98	0.67		
low-context communicators (n=59)	2.84	0.74		
Caucasians from UC Berkeley				
high-context communicators (n=66)	3.11	0.66		
low-context communicators (n=73)	2.64	0.83		

$*p < .05.$ $**p < .01.$ $***p < .001.$

*legends:

N= number of participants within group;

M= mean;

SD= standard deviation;

F= degree of difference in the dependent variable created by the independent variable;

Sig= statistical significance difference in the dependent variable produced by the independent variables (must be lower than .05 in order for variable to be significant)

FIGURE III

COMMUNICATION STYLES ON CULTURAL DIFFERENCES
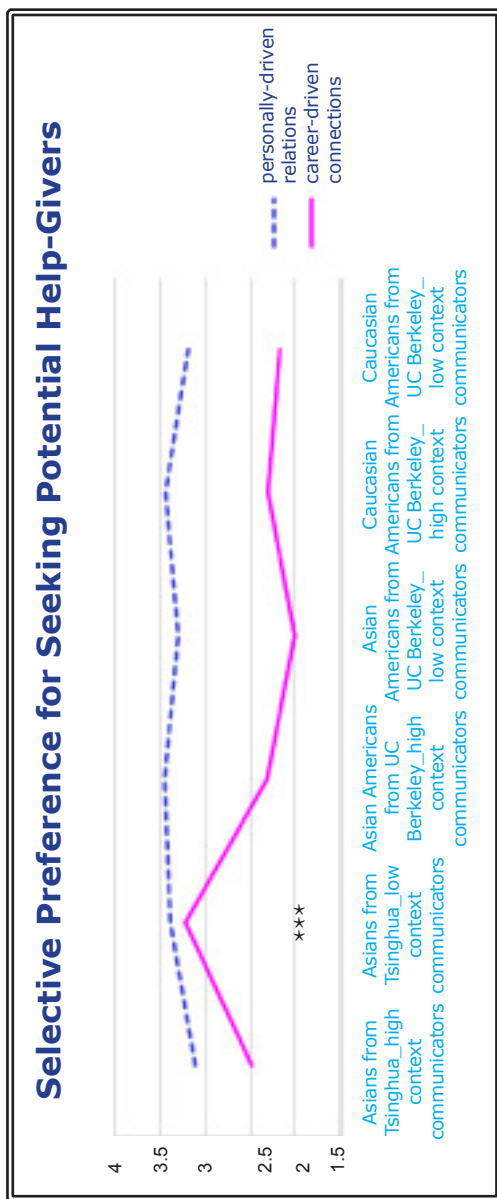IN SELECTIVE PREFERENCE FOR POTENTIAL HELP-GIVERS

Figure above shows that Tsinghua University's Asian students who were low-context communicators were the most likely group to seek help from their teachers, boss and subordinate (N= 126, M= 2.59, SD= .724); while UC Berkeley's Asian American students who were low-context communicators indicated the least preference doing so (N= 59, M= 2.01, SD= .567), F(2,475) = 7.61, ***p= .001. Context-communication style was a significant moderator in cultural differences for selective preference to seek career-connections for help (***p< .001) but not personally-driven connections among the three ethnic groups (p >.05).

FIGURE VI

IMPLICIT POWER ON CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN
SELECTIVE PREFERENCE FOR POTENTIAL HELP-GIVERS

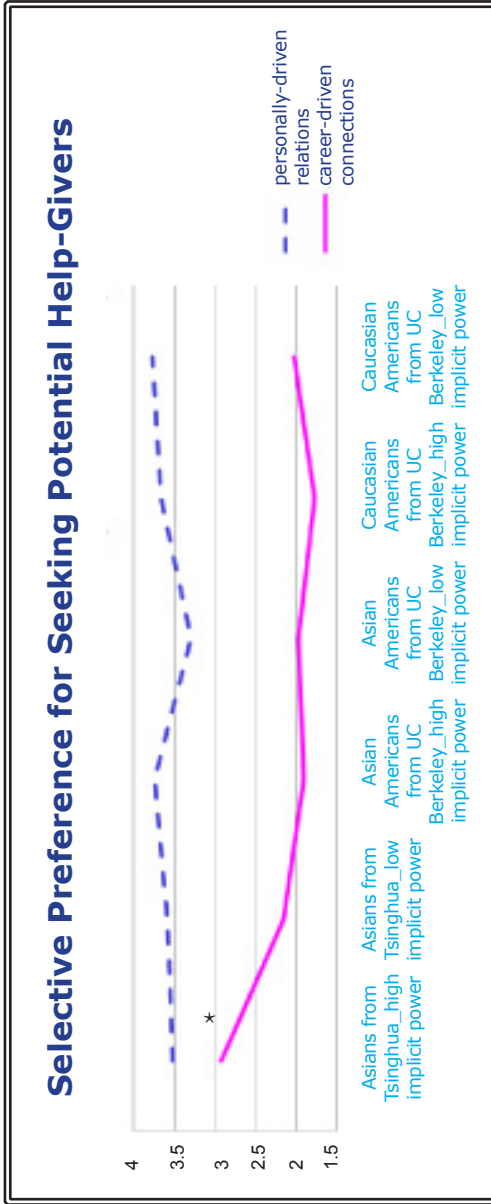### Selective Preference for Seeking Potential Help-Givers

Figure above shows that Asian students from Tsinghua University who were primed with high implicit power indicated greater preference to seek help from boss and colleagues (N= 85, M= 2.48, SD= 1.03) while Caucasian American students from UC Berkeley who were primed with high implicit power showed the least preference of doing so (N= 65, M= 1.77, SD= 1.19), F(2,475) = 4.43, *p = .012. Implicit power was a significant moderator in cultural differences for selective preference to seek career-connections for help (★p= .015) but not personally-driven connections among the three ethnic groups (p >.05).

TABLE III

INTERACTION BETWEEN ETHNICITY
AND IMPLICIT POWER ON HELP-SEEKING
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Analysis by dimension of help-seeking

Help-seeking Dimension	M	SD	F	Sig.
willingness level			4.84	.008***
Asians from Tsinghua				
high-context communicators (n=85)	3.65	0.93		
low-context communicators (n=110)	3.76	0.75		
Asian Americans from UC Berkeley				
high-context communicators (n=75)	3.80	0.79		
low-context communicators (n=72)	3.35	1.01		
Caucasians from UC Berkeley				
high-context communicators (n=65)	3.83	0.67		
low-context communicators (n=74)	3.82	0.93		
comfort level			4.43	.012***
Asians from Tsinghua				
high-context communicators (n=85)	2.48	1.03		
low-context communicators (n=110)	2.06	1.07		

	M	SD	F	Sig
Asian Americans from UC Berkeley				
high-context communicators (n=75)	1.91	1.07		
low-context communicators (n=72)	1.97	1.03		
Caucasians from UC Berkeley				
high-context communicators (n=65)	1.78	1.19		
low-context communicators (n=74)	2.03	1.06		
level of expected helpfulness			5.74	.003***
Asians from Tsinghua				
high-context communicators (n=85)	3.09	1.18		
low-context communicators (n=110)	3.04	1.07		
Asian Americans from UC Berkeley				
high-context communicators (n=75)	3.55	1.08		
low-context communicators (n=72)	3.11	1.07		
Caucasians from UC Berkeley				
high-context communicators (n=65)	3.12	1.34		
low-context communicators (n=74)	3.59	1.08		

$*p < .05.$ $**p < .01.$ $***p < .001.$

*legends:

N= number of participants within group;

M= mean;

SD= standard deviation;

F= degree of difference in the dependent variable created by the independent variable;

Sig= statistical significance difference in the dependent variable produced by the independent variables

(must be lower than .05 in order for variable to be significant)