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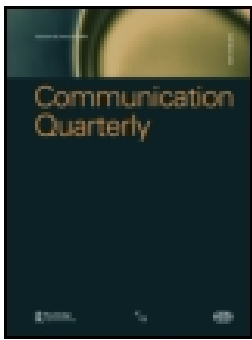Jang, Joo Young
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Explaining the Effectiveness of the Integrated Model of Advice-Giving in Supportive Interactions: The Mediating Roles of Politeness and Normativeness

Bo Feng, Joo Young Jang, Ildo Kim, & Bingqing Wang

The current study examined the effect of the Integrated Model of Advice-giving (Emotional Support—Problem Inquiry and Analysis—Advice) on recipients' responses to advice, exploring the mediating roles of perceived regard for face and normativeness. Participants read and responded to a conversation in which they received advice from a friend regarding a problematic situation. Results indicated that perceived regard for positive face mediated the relationship between the sequential placement of emotional support and recipients' responses to advice. Neither perceived regard for face nor normativeness mediated the relationship between the sequential placement of problem inquiry and analysis and recipients' responses to advice. Findings of this study suggest that the provision of emotional support has a primary role in IMA and is effective in addressing the positive face needs of advice recipient.

Keywords: Advice; Emotional Support; Evaluation of Advice Quality; Facilitation of Coping; Implementation Intention; Normativeness; Problem Inquiry and Analysis; Regard for Face

Individuals facing problematic situations often seek and receive advice from others. In its generic form, advice can be defined as a recommendation regarding a decision or future

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course of action. Research on advice as a form of supportive communication has focused on advice as a recommendation about what to do, think, or feel to cope with a problematic and oftentimes stressful situation (MacGeorge, Graves, Feng, Gillihan, & Burleson, 2004). As common as it is, advice giving is a strategic communicative act that requires skill, and advice recipients' responses to advice can vary substantially (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; MacGeorge, Feng, & Thompson, 2008; MacGeorge, Guntzviller, Branch, & Yakova, 2015b; Yaniv, 2004). Past research has shown that recipient responses toward advice, including their evaluation of advice quality, perceived advice facilitation of coping, and intention to implement advice tend to differ as a function of advice message features, adviser and recipient characteristics, as well as contextual features (Feng & Burleson, 2006; MacGeorge, Feng, Butler, & Budarz, 2004; MacGeorge, Graves et al., 2004; MacGeorge, Guntzviller, Hanasono, & Feng, 2016; for a review, see MacGeorge, Feng, & Burleson, 2011).

Acknowledging the interactional nature of advice communication (Limberg & Locher, 2012) and the interconnectedness between advice and other supportive acts, Feng (2009, 2014) proposed and tested an Integrated Model of Advice-Giving (IMA), which highlighted the sequential placement of advice in supportive interactions as an important contextual factor that can influence recipient responses to advice. Communication context can be broadly defined as the environment in which communication takes place (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1991), and it encompasses cultural, physical, temporal, social-psychological, and conversational contexts. The IMA highlights the role of conversational context in advice communication. More specifically, it emphasizes the importance of the strategic positioning or timing of advice during the course of a conversation (or sometimes a series of conversations) and its connectedness with other communicative tasks. According to the IMA (Feng, 2009, 2014), advice can be proffered along with two other forms of supportive acts—emotional support and problem inquiry and analysis—to produce optimal outcomes. More specifically, the IMA suggests that advising in supportive interactions should be carried out in the Emotional Support—Problem Inquiry and Analysis—Advice sequence. The provision of sensitive emotional support (e.g., expressions of understanding, care, and concern) as an initial response to a distressed individual's troubles talk is beneficial in the sense that it will help the recipient cope with their negative emotions and will help create a supportive conversational environment for any subsequent problem-focused conversation.

The IMA model further proposes that, in order to assess the relevance and appropriateness of advice content, it is crucial for the advice giver to engage in problem inquiry and analysis with the recipient. Engaging in this supportive act will enable the helper to "determine the relevance of advice and formulate a piece of advice that takes into account the target's situation and perspectives" (Feng, 2014, p. 916). Empirical testing of the IMA using both American and Chinese samples demonstrated that advice offered following the sequence proposed in the model tends to elicit higher evaluation of advice quality and stronger intention to follow advice from advice recipient (Feng, 2009, 2014). Recent advice research that examined the interactional context of advice messages in a laboratory setting also produced evidence demonstrating the positive influence of good quality emotional support and problem-focused talk on advice evaluation and outcomes (MacGeorge et al., 2015; MacGeorge, Guntzviller, Branch, & Yakova, 2015a).

Despite the empirical evidence that has been garnered in support of the IMA's validity, the cognitive and psychological mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of the IMA remain largely speculative. Identifying the mediators that explain the effectiveness of the IMA can help us better understand the mechanisms through which the IMA functions as well as the more proximal factors that influence advice reception. At a pragmatic level, advising in supportive interactions is effective to the extent that an advice giver can communicate with the advice recipient in a way that promotes the recipient's relevant cognitive and/or psychological states, which may exert a more direct influence on the outcomes of advice interactions (e.g., implementation of the advised action, facilitation of coping), at least in the short term. Therefore, the current study attempts to fill this gap in the literature by examining the roles of two possible mediators in explaining the effectiveness of the IMA: perceived regard for face and perceived normativeness of sequential placement of advice in supportive interactions.

The Mediating Role of Perceived Regard for Face

Substantial research has found that perceived politeness, or regard for face, is an important factor influencing advice recipient's responses to advice (Feng & Feng, 2013; Feng & Magen, 2016; Goldsmith, 2000; MacGeorge, Feng et al., 2004; MacGeorge et al., 2016). The significance of politeness in advice communication originates from the intrinsic nature of advice as a "face threatening" speech act (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Duthler, 2006; Goffman, 2003). In Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, the concept of "face" refers to the desired public self-image that individuals want to project in a relational situation. Politeness theory identifies two types of face: positive face and negative face. Positive face is the desire to have one's identity liked, appreciated, and approved of; negative face is the desire to maintain one's freedom and autonomy without imposition from others. A speaker can use positive politeness strategies (e.g., presupposing knowledge or common ground, expressing liking and understanding) or negative politeness strategies (e.g., using hedges or depersonalization) to reduce the threat to a listener's positive or negative face.

Advice has been conceptualized as an intrinsically face-threatening act because of the negative implications it carries. Advice giving suggests that the targets lack knowledge or competence in managing the problematic situation on their own, thus threatening the targets' positive face (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997). Advice also threatens targets' negative face by imposing on their independence and autonomy in decision making, especially if the targets feel obligated or pressured to follow the advice (Goldsmith, 2000; Kunkel, Wilson, Olufowote, & Robson, 2003). A number of studies have demonstrated that advice perceived by recipients as attending to their face needs (i.e., polite) is generally seen as more sensitive, appropriate, and effective than advice that is delivered with less attention to recipients' face needs (Feng & Feng, 2013; Goldsmith, 2000; MacGeorge, Feng et al., 2004; MacGeorge et al., 2015). Research also indicates that face concern becomes particularly salient when advice is not explicitly solicited (Feng & MacGeorge, 2006; Goldsmith, 2000; Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997).

Previous studies examining the linkage between language features of advice and politeness have primarily focused on politeness strategies (i.e., facework) that are instantiated as a component of advice message per se (e.g., Feng & Burleson, 2008; Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000; MacGeorge, Lichtman, & Pressey, 2002). For example, negative facework in advice is often manipulated in the form of indirectness or hedges (e.g., "Maybe you could try talking to your professor") and positive facework is reflected in words or phrases indicating inclusion or acceptance (e.g., "When things like this happen, we need to step up for the challenge").

As discussed earlier, responding to others' stress and problems is an intellectually and socially challenging task (Aakhus & Rumsey, 2010). Disclosing a personal problem or revealing a need for assistance from others can pose a threat to an individual's sense of autonomy and competence. Therefore, by offering support in a manner that is attentive to the recipient's face needs, a support provider can facilitate the target's coping with their negative emotions and problem solving. From the perspective of politeness theory, emotional support, which is typically instantiated by expressions of understanding, sympathy, and concern, can also function as positive politeness strategies that address the target's face needs (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000; MacGeorge et al., 2015). The provision of sensitive emotional support prior to advice giving encourages recipients' own sense-making of the problematic situation (MacGeorge et al., 2015) and provides the recipient with more space for working through their thoughts and emotions. Therefore, the move of emotional support prior to advice giving may also serve as a negative politeness strategy that conveys respect for the recipient's autonomy and mitigates the threat to the recipient's negative face. Accordingly, the following hypothesis was proposed:

> H1: The effects of the sequential placement of emotional support on advice recipient's responses (evaluation of advice quality, facilitation of coping, and implementation intention) will be mediated by the recipient's perceptions of the advice giver's regard for face.

In the similar vein, problem inquiry and analysis can function as a politeness strategy. Engagement in problem inquiry and analysis allows an adviser to assess the relevance of advice and, if advice is deemed warranted, to come up with an appropriate piece of advice to fit the recipient's perspective and situation. During the process, the message recipient is invited to share his or her thoughts, knowledge, views, and experience related to the problem situation. By engaging the recipient in problem inquiry and analysis, the advice giver conveys recognition of and respect for the recipient's perspective as well as the recipient's capacity in managing the situation on their own. Accordingly, the following hypothesis was proposed:

> H2: The effects of the sequential placement of problem inquiry and analysis on advice recipient's responses will be mediated by the recipient's perceptions of the advice giver's regard for face.

The Mediating Role of Perceived Normativeness

Message production and interpretation in social interactions are governed by normative principles (e.g., Grice, 1975; Schwart, 1994; see Wyer & Adaval, 2003). Normativeness is

concerned with what is considered to be normal, acceptable, or appropriate behavior in a particular environment, situation, or culture (Burleson, Holmstrom, & Gilstrap, 2005). Normativeness reflects the consideration of what people should do (i.e., injunctive norms) and what people typically do (i.e., descriptive norms) in a given context (Christensen, Rothgerber, Wood, & Matz, 2004; Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). Individuals tend to enact a behavior in accordance with social norms (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005; Rimal & Real, 2005). While politeness is typically viewed as a normative principle guiding individuals' social behaviors, there are many other principles that constitute social norms, such as informativeness and relevance (Wyer & Adaval, 2003). In this study, we focus on perceived normativeness as a holistic judgement of the extent to which an interactant's communicative behavior is appropriate.

There has been a great deal of empirical research on social behaviors and normativeness in various contexts (see Abbott, Nandeibam, & O'Shea, 2013; Allcott, 2011; Larimer & Neighbors, 2003; Real & Rimal, 2007; Rimal & Real, 2005; Thomas & Sharp, 2013). In the realm of supportive communication, research has found that helping distressed others, especially those in personal relationships, is a normative social behavior (see Deckop, Cirka, & Andersson, 2003; Lapinski & Rimal, 2005; Seinen & Schram, 2006). Substantial research has shown that support messages that convey understanding and respect of the target's thoughts and feelings are generally viewed as more sensitive, appropriate, and higher in quality than messages that do not contain those expressions (Burleson, 2003, 2008; Feng, 2009; 2014; Jones, 2004; Jones & Wirtz, 2006; MacGeorge, Samter, Feng, Gillihan, & Graves, 2007; for a review, see MacGeorge et al., 2011). Advice recipients in stressful situations tend to seek solace or comfort in addition to guidance or recommendations (Rime, Corsini, & Herbette, 2002). At the same time, plenty of research has shown that people often fail to provide high quality support (MacGeorge, Gillihan, Samter, & Clark, 2003; MacGeorge & Wilkum, 2012). Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that people would consider the provision of comforting as an initial response to an individual's troubles talk as part of the social norm regarding support behaviors. Therefore, we proposed the following hypothesis:

> H3: *The effects of the sequential placement of emotional support on the advice recipient's responses (evaluation of advice quality, facilitation of coping, and implementation intention) will be mediated by the recipient's perceptions of the normativeness of the conversation.*

Similarly, engaging the target in problem inquiry and analysis prior to offering any advice should be viewed as more normative than not doing so. Through the process of problem inquiry and analysis, both the adviser and recipient can better comprehend what caused the problem, why the target is facing the problem, as well as the target's views toward the problem. Problem inquiry and analysis prior to advice giving thus enables the support provider to assess the relevance of advice and, if advice is deemed warranted, effectively construct the advice based on information gained through the process. In professional settings, problem inquiry and analysis is often a necessary and required move to take before a recommendation can be made (e.g., doctor-patient communication; for a review, see Ha & Longnecker, 2010). Individuals tend to attach more importance to their

own opinions than to those of others (Yaniv & Kleinberger, 2000). Not surprisingly, research indicates that people are more likely to resist advice that is offered without an expressed attempt to understand their perspectives (Feng, 2009, 2014). Based on the preceding rationale, the following hypothesis was proposed:

> H4: *The effects of the sequential placement of problem inquiry and analysis on advice recipient's responses (evaluation of advice quality, facilitation of coping, and implementation intention) will be mediated by the recipient's perceptions of the normativeness of the conversation.*

Method

Participants

Participants were 752 undergraduate students at two large universities in the Midwest and the West Coast of the United States. Most of the participants were female ($n = 505$), and the participants' age ranged from 18–36 years ($M = 20.7$, $SD = 1.62$). The majority of participants were European Americans ($n = 507$), followed by Asian Americans ($n = 137$), African Americans ($n = 30$), Hispanic ($n = 28$), and members of other ethnicities ($n = 50$).

Experimental Design and Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to read a conversation scenario in which a friend proffers advice to the participant regarding a problematic situation.[1] Eleven versions of the advice-giving model were identified: EPA, EAP, PAE, PEA, AEP, APE, EA, AE, PA, AP, A (E stands for emotional support, P stands for problem inquiry and analysis, and A stands for advice; see the appendix for an example of a conversation exhibiting the EPA sequence). To assess generalizability of findings, three hypothetical problems were included in the design (i.e., failing an important exam, having a conflict with parents over choice of future career, and being underpaid at a part-time job). Therefore, a total of 33 versions of the conversation were used in this study; each participant read one version of the conversation. After reading the hypothetical scenario, participants answered questions regarding their perceptions of the advice-giver's regard for face, normativeness, and evaluations of the advice, along with some other questions not related to the current study.

Measurement

Advice quality
Goldsmith and MacGeorge's (2000) scale was used to measure participants' evaluation of the overall quality of the advice message. The scale consists of five items on 7-point Likert-style scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) ("effective," "helpful," "appropriate," "sensitive," "supportive"). The five items exhibited good internal consistency ($a = 0.88$).

Facilitation of coping

MacGeorge, Feng et al.'s (2004) scale was used to measure participants' perceived facilitation of coping. The scale includes nine items on 7-point Likert-style scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) (e.g., "I would be more confident about my ability to improve the situation," "I would feel better able to manage any emotional distress I was having"). The internal consistency for the nine items was good (*a* = 0.94).

Implementation intention

MacGeorge, Feng et al.'s (2004) scale was used to measure participants' perceived implementation intention. The scale includes three items on 7-point Likert-style scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) (e.g., "I planned to follow the advice I was given," "It was my intention to use the advice I had been given"). The three items showed good internal consistency (*a* = 0.92).

Perception of advice-giver's regard for face

Feng and Burleson's (2006) 15-item scale of politeness was used to measure perceptions of the advice-giver's regard for face. The items were also assessed on 7-point Likert-style scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) (e.g., "The advice giver did not challenge the recipient's competence," "The advice did not impose too much on the recipient"). The internal consistency for these items was good (α = 0.93).

Perception of normativeness

A measure consisting of seven items on 7-point Likert-style scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) was developed to assess perceptions of normativeness of the friend's reactions to the participant's problem (e.g., "The way my friend approached my upset was inappropriate, "What my friend said was appropriate," "My friends' reaction to my problem was proper"). The items indicated good internal consistency (*a* = 0.84).

Scenario realism

Participants' perceptions of the realism of the scenarios were measured with five Likert-style items on 5-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) (e.g., "My friend's responses in the scenario were likely in real life," "It's possible that I will encounter the situation in the scenario in real life"). The five items constituted a reliable scale (α = 0.86).

Results

With a sample of 752 participants and a two-tailed α = 0.05, the estimated power of the present study to detect significant mediation effects was 0.78 for small effects (*dr* = 0.02) and in excess of 0.99 for moderate effects (*dr* = 0.15) and large effects (*dr* = 0.40) (Kenny, 2016).

The average rated scenario realism across the three problem scenarios was relatively high (fail exam: $M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.77$; conflict with parents: $M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.79$; underpaid at job: $M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.72$). These results indicate that, overall, participants perceived the hypothetical scenarios as realistic.

The MEDIATE macro[2] developed by Hayes and Preacher (2013) was employed to assess the mediation hypotheses. Scenario realism was included as a covariate in all analyses. Means and standard deviations for the outcome variables and mediators are presented in Table 1. Correlations among variables are presented in Table 2.

H1 and H3 predicted that the effects of the sequential placement of emotional support on advice recipient's responses would be mediated by advice giver's regard for face and normativeness, respectively.[3] Using dummy coding to code the order of emotional support, the bootstrapping analysis showed that the indirect effects of the order of emotional support, through regard for face, on advice quality ($B = .0087$, $SE = 0.0059$, 95%CI [0.0006, 0.0216]), facilitation of coping ($B = 0.0069$, $SE = 0.0046$, 95%CI [0.0005, 0.0169]), and implementation intention ($B = 0.0069$, $SE = 0.0046$, 95%CI [0.0005, 0.0174]) were all significant. Therefore, H1 was supported. The direct effects of the sequential placement of emotional support on advice quality, $F (2, 748) = 10.53$, $p < 0.001$, facilitation of coping, $F (2, 748) = 10.41$, $p < 0.001$, and implementation intention, $F (2, 748) = 5.94$, $p < 0.05$ were all significant. Therefore, regard for face partially mediated the relationship between the sequential placement of emotional support and advice quality, facilitation of coping, and implementation intention.

Follow-up analyses were conducted to examine if perceived regard for positive face and perceived regard for negative face functioned differently. Results showed that the indirect effects of the order of emotional support, through positive face, on advice quality ($B = 0.0076$, $SE = 0.0049$, 95%CI [0.0009, 0.0181]), facilitation of coping ($B = 0.0066$,

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variables and Mediators

Variables	Advice before E		Advice after E		Advice before P		Advice after P	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Advice quality	5.66[a]	1.08	5.91[b]	0.93	5.56[a]	1.11	5.92[b]	0.92
Implementation intention	4.96[a]	1.17	5.23[b]	1.11	4.97[a]	1.24	5.21[b]	1.07
Facilitation of coping	5.03[a]	1.04	5.30[b]	0.86	4.97[a]	1.04	5.29[b]	0.87
Regard for face	5.28[a]	0.98	5.47[b]	0.82	5.20[a]	0.96	5.44[b]	0.85
Regard for positive face	5.29[a]	1.06	5.48[b]	0.90	5.22[a]	1.02	5.45[b]	0.93
Regard for negative face	5.25	0.98	5.39	0.84	5.20[a]	0.96	5.44[b]	0.89
Perceived normativeness	5.42[a]	0.99	5.54[b]	0.92	5.30[a]	1.01	5.57[b]	0.90

Note. E stands for the move of *Emotional Support*. P stands for the move of *Problem Inquiry and Analysis*. a and b denote significant difference between different notations within the same row ($p < 0.05$).

Table 2 Correlations Among Variables

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Evaluation of advice quality	0.72*	0.65*	0.79*	0.74*	0.65*	0.80*	0.54*
2. Facilitation of coping		0.74*	0.69*	0.65*	0.55*	0.63*	0.47*
3. Implementation intention			0.61*	0.60*	0.48*	0.60*	0.46*
4. Regard for face				0.94*	0.87*	0.81*	0.53*
5. Regard for positive face					0.74*	0.78*	0.51*
6. Regard for negative face						0.65*	0.43*
7. Perceived normativeness							0.59*
8. Scenario realism							

Note. $*p < 0.001$

$SE = 0.0042$, 95%CI [0.0005, 0.0158]), and implementation intention ($B = 0.0071$, $SE = 0.0045$, 95%CI [0.0008, 0.0172]), were all significant. However, the indirect effects of the order of emotional support, through negative face, on advice quality ($B = 0.0005$, $SE = 0.0021$, 95%CI [−0.0011, 0.0046]), facilitation of coping ($B = 0.0004$, $SE = 0.0017$, 95%CI [−0.0009, 0.0038]), and implementation intention ($B = 0.0004$, $SE = 0.0017$, 95%CI [−0.0009, 0.0039]), were not significant. Thus, positive face mediated the relationships between sequential placement of emotional support and the outcome measures, while negative face did not.

The indirect effects of the sequential placement of emotional support, through normativeness, on advice quality ($B = 0.0040$, $SE = 0.0041$, 95%CI [−0.0009, 0.0130]), facilitation of coping ($B = 0.0025$, $SE = 0.0026$, 95%CI [−0.0005, 0.0084]), and implementation intention ($B = 0.0029$, $SE = 0.0030$, 95%CI [−0.0006, 0.0097]), were not significant. Therefore, H3 was not supported.

H2 and H4 predicted that the effects of the sequential placement of problem inquiry and analysis on advice recipients' responses would be mediated by perceived advice giver's regard for face and normativeness, respectively. Using dummy coding to code the sequential placement of problem inquiry and analysis, bootstrapping analysis showed that the sequential placement of problem inquiry and analysis was significantly directly associated with advice quality, $F (2, 748) = 7.54$, $p < 0.001$, and facilitation of coping, $F (2, 748) = 5.76$, $p < 0.05$, but not for implementation intention, $F (2, 748) = 2.45$, *n.s.* The indirect effects through regard for face were not significant on advice quality ($B = 0.0029$, $SE = 0.0039$, 95% CI [−0.0013, 0.0105]), facilitation of coping ($B = 0.0023$, $SE = 0.0031$, 95%CI [−0.0010, 0.0090]), or implementation intention ($B = 0.0023$, $SE = 0.0030$, 95%CI [−0.0010, 0.0085]). Follow-up analyses revealed neither a mediating effect of regard for positive face nor regard for negative face. The indirect effects were also not significant through normativeness on advice quality ($B = 0.0031$, $SE = 0.0039$, 95%CI [−0.0010, 0.0116]), facilitation of coping ($B = 0.0020$, $SE = 0.0024$, 95%CI [−0.0007, 0.0073]), or implementation intention ($B = 0.0023$, $SE = 0.0029$, 95%CI [−0.0008, 0.0087]). Therefore, neither H2 nor H4 was supported.

Discussion

The sequential placement of advice is a significant contextual factor affecting how recipients respond to advice in supportive interactions (Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998; Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Vehviläinen, 2001). Consistent with this perspective, the IMA (Feng, 2009, 2014) proposes that before giving advice, helpers should help the target work through his or her emotional distress through the provision of emotional support and assess the relevance of giving advice through inquiry and analysis of the target's problematic situation. This study explored the mechanism underlying the effect of the IMA by examining the mediating roles of perceived regard for face and normativeness. In the following section, we review major findings of the study, discuss practical and theoretical implications of the findings, as well as the study's limitations, and suggest several directions for future research.

Consistent with our prediction, our data revealed that perceived regard for face partially mediated the relationship between the sequential placement of emotional support and recipients' responses toward advice. Specifically, advice that was offered following the provision of emotional support was perceived as being more attentive to the recipient's face concerns, which in turn positively influenced the recipient's evaluation of the advice quality, facilitation of coping, and intention to follow the advice. However, when advice was offered before the provision of emotional support, the benefits of emotional support appeared less salient because "damage" to the recipient's face was already done. It is notable that the mediation effect of perceived regard for face was significant across all the three outcome measures, although the mediating effect appeared to be slightly stronger for advice quality than facilitation of coping or implementation intention. This finding is consistent with previous research showing that regard for face is a critical factor guiding supportive interactions (Goldsmith, 2000; MacGeorge, Feng et al., 2004; MacGeorge et al., 2016). Meanwhile, our results indicate that it was positive regard for face that explained the influence of the sequential placement of emotional support on the advice outcomes. Interestingly, perceived regard for negative face did not appear to have any mediating effect. This finding suggests that, as two sub-constructs of politeness, regard for positive face and regard for negative face function differently in the processes through which they influence advice reception. While the provision of emotional support prior to advice giving was effective in conveying liking and acceptance of the recipient and helped preserve the recipient's desirable self-image, it did not alleviate threat to the recipient's negative face. Our results showed that the engagement of problem inquiry and analysis prior to giving advice helped to convey regard for both the recipient's positive face and negative face. In light of these findings, future research should further investigate the different mechanisms through which positive face and negative face influence advice communication.

Although the sequential placement of problem inquiry and analysis did influence the recipient's perception of regard for face and normativeness, we did not observe significant mediating effects of perceived regard for face or normativeness on the relationships between the sequential placement of problem inquiry and analysis and the recipient's responses. There are several possible explanations for these findings. One obvious

explanation for these findings is that factors other than regard for face and perceived normativeness serve as the explanatory mechanisms. However, it would be premature to completely reject regard for face and perceived normativeness as potential mediators, especially in light of several constraints in this study's experimental design. First, advice across all experimental conditions exhibited high regard for face and high normativeness (an average of above 5 on a 7-point scale). This was not surprising given that (a) the advice was described as being solicited from a friend and (b) the quality of the advice messages, which were held constant across all conditions, was high (see MacGeorge et al., 2011). Consistent with prior research, results of this study showed that participants' responses to solicited advice from friends (Feng & MacGeorge, 2006; MacGeorge et al., 2016) and high quality advice messages (Feng, 2009, 2014; Feng & Burleson, 2008) were generally positive, resulting in relatively limited variation in both the outcome variables and mediators. Likewise, since the advice messages across all conditions were given only in relatively close relationships (i.e., friends), the variation might be also limited in both the outcome variables and mediators. Given that the magnitude of face threat and normative expectations are situationally variable (see Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000; Rousseau et al., 2007), supportive acts, such as comforting, problem inquiry and analysis, and advice, that are provided in a non-close relationship might affect perceived regard for face and normativeness differently. Further testing of the mediating roles of regard for face and normativeness should examine if unsolicited advice, less-skilled advice, or advice that is offered from a non-close relationship will produce more significant effects than those observed in this study.

In addition, compared to more serious stressors such as losing employment or coping with depression, the three life events examined in our study (i.e., failing an exam, having a conflict with parents, and being underpaid at a part-time job) are of relatively small magnitude of severity. It is reasonable to infer that engaging in emotional support and problem inquiry and analyses prior to advising on more serious stressors will exhibit greater sensitivity to the stressed individual's face concerns and expectation of social norms. Future research should investigate this possibility.

The use of hypothetical scenarios to elicit imagined responses from participants has been a commonly used methodology in social science, especially regarding relatively private and difficult-to-observe practices such as supportive interactions (e.g., Frantz & Bennigson, 2005; Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000; Marigold, Cavallo, Holmes, & Wood, 2014; Study 1). It was also deemed appropriate given the focus of the current study. However, there are notable limitations inherent in this methodological approach (see Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002). For example, participants' imagined responses to hypothetical supportive messages may differ from their responses to those messages in real-life supportive interactions due in part to the dynamic and fluid nature of conversations and the role that emotions play in supportive interactions. MacGeorge and colleagues' recent work on naturally occurring supportive interactions (MacGeorge et al., 2015a, 2015b) serves as a good exemplar for further investigation of the mechanisms underlying the IMA.

Despite its limitations, this study offers some practical suggestions for would-be advice givers. First, conveying regard for the listener's autonomy and preserving the person's positive self-image is of vital importance in responding to someone's problematic

situation. To the extent that a support message conveys sensitivity to the target's face concerns, it will likely elicit positive reactions from the target. As this study reveals, regard for the listener's face can be communicated through various linguistic moves including, but are not limited to, (a) highly person-centered emotional support, which typically contains expression of understanding and recognition of the legitimacy of the target's emotions, (b) involved conversation with the target aiming to jointly better understand the problematic situation, and (c) advice messages that explicitly acknowledge the target's freedom of choice and competence.

Second, the support provider needs to be aware of the context within which the interaction occurs and construct a tailored response in accordance with the social, cultural, situational, and relational norms governing the context. A response that is considered appropriate and sensitive in one context may be viewed as inappropriate and offensive in a different context. For example, while asking probing questions about someone's private matters may be relatively acceptable in intimate relationships, it is a risky move to take when trying to help a non-close other. Relatedly, the integrated advice giving model should not be used as a fixed recipe for advice giving. Instead, the model should be employed as a holistic framework guiding supportive interactions. Support providers should constantly monitor and adapt to the dynamic and fluid conversations as they unfold and assess the necessity, timing, and duration of a certain supportive move. For instance, it may be beneficial to provide emotional support at multiple stages of a supportive interaction (e.g., at the initial stage and the closing stage). Likewise, based on information gathered through problem inquiry and analysis, it may be most appropriate and effective *not* to give any advice.

Notes

[1]   Given the documented role of gender in supportive communication (e.g., Burleson et al., 2005), the gender of advice giver may influence participants' perceptions and responses. However, since gender is not a variable of theoretical interest in the current study, we decided not to specify the friend's gender in the hypothetical scenarios.
[2]   The MEDIATE macro uses the ordinary least squares regression to estimate both direct and indirect effects. It is exclusively used to assess mediation effects. Thus, we chose this macro to fit the purpose of the present study.
[3]   Problem type was included in the current experimental design to assess generalizability of findings. Preliminary analyses were conducted to examine if problem type had any interaction with the independent variables or mediators in their effects on the dependent variables. No interaction was detected. Given that problem type was not a variable of theoretical interest and the absence of interaction between problem type and the independent variables or the mediators, it was not analyzed further in the subsequent hypothesis-testing analyses.

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Appendix: An Example of a Conversation Exhibiting the EPA Sequence

Your friend: Hi there! I haven't seen you in a while. How is everything going?

You: Oh, hi. OK. Well, maybe not so OK. You know, I went back home this past weekend?

Your friend: Yeah?

You: Well, my parents and I talked about my school work and future career plans. My parents said that they wanted me to attend law school after graduation but I told them I want to find a job in an advertisement company and start working right away. They were apparently not happy with my plan. I don't like it when I disappoint my parents, but sometimes their expectations are really high. They've worked hard to provide me with what I need. I would feel guilty for not making them proud.

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[Emotional Support]

Your friend: Sure, that's understandable. My mom wanted me to be a doctor, but it's just that I really don't like the idea of working in hospitals. Although she finally agreed that I study the major I picked myself, I sometimes still feel bad that I wasn't able to do what she wanted me to do. Parents can be pushy, but in the end they really just want their kids to be happy. Seriously, I'm sure you're making your parents proud; parents sometimes just forget to tell their kids that.

You: Yeah, I guess you're right, although I still feel kind of bad about it.

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[Problem Inquiry and Analysis]

Your friend: Have you talked to your parents about it since you came back?

You: No. I talked with my mom over the phone twice but neither of us brought up that topic.

Your friend: Are you going to see them again soon?

You: Actually I'm going home this weekend. We'll be attending my cousin's wedding. I feel that the conflict is still there and I should not pretend it doesn't exist. It really bothers me.

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[Advice]

Your friend: Well, maybe when you go home next time, you can sit down with them and have an adult conversation with them. Maybe you can explain to them what your interests are, what you want to do, and how you'll earn a living doing it. Maybe you can tell them that although you respect their desire to see you become such and such, your heart just isn't in it. Having that kind of conversation with parents may be awkward, but at least you could help your parents understand your situation better. I remember having that kind of conversation with my mom when we had that problem, and I think she was more understanding and supportive of my decision afterwards.

You: Those are some good ideas; I just wish I could make both me and my parents happy.