

# The Effect of Imagined Support on Physiological Indicators of Stress

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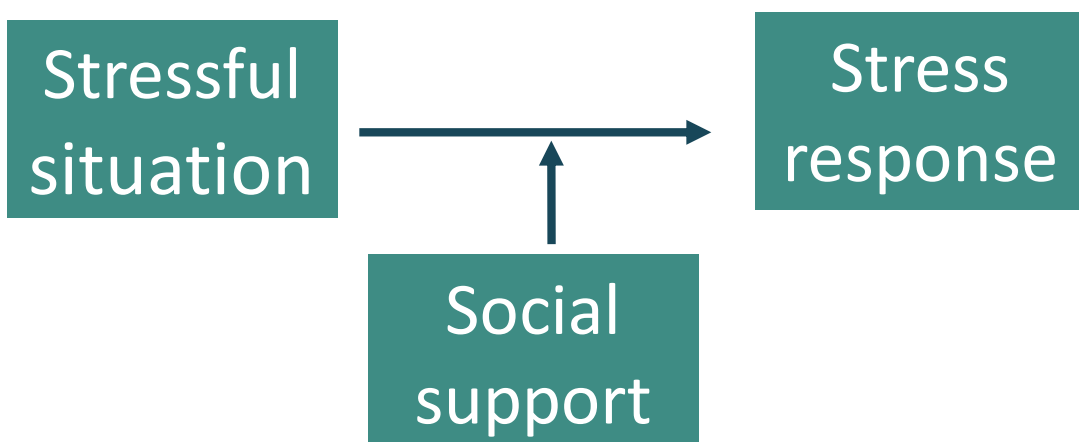
## Introduction

### Background

- Social support helps individuals to be less reactive to stressors (Uchino, Cacioppo, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996).
- In times when support is not available, stress can be exacerbated, and it can be beneficial to internalize representations of attachment figures (Jakubiak & Feeney, 2016).
- The purpose of this project is to identify whether imagining supportive touch or emotional social support is best at moderating stress, shown through measures perceived stress, heart rate, and blood pressure.

### Research Question

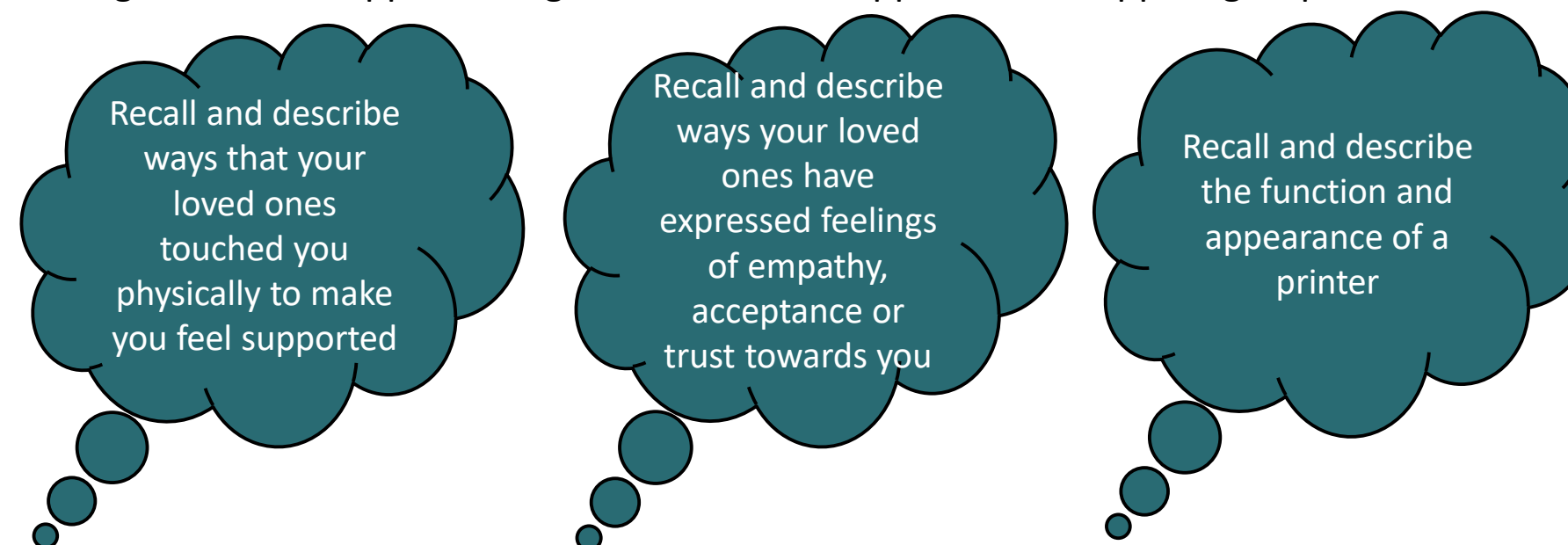
- Will the type of imagined social support moderate the effects of stress?



## Method

### Procedure

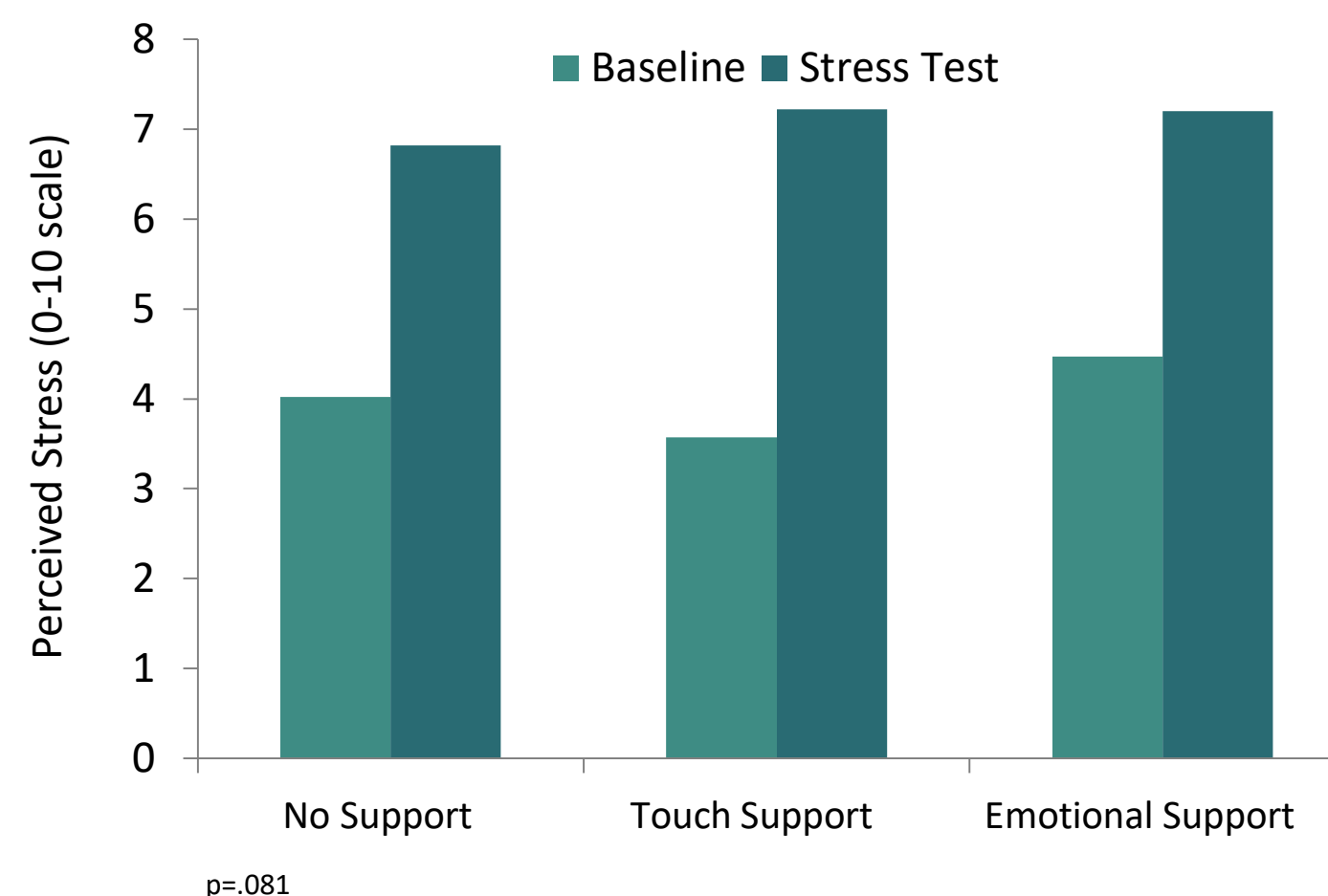
- Participants (N=120; 87% women; 56% white; Age  $M = 21$ ) were randomly assigned to an imagined touch support, imagined emotional support or no support group.



- Stress was manipulated using the Trier Social Stress Task (TSST).
  - Speech task- Mentally prepare and present a five minute speech
  - Counting task- Subtract the number 13 from 1,022
- After general instructions, Ps completed the support manipulation and the stress test.
- Perceived stress and blood pressure were measured at baseline, after the support manipulation, and during the stress test.
- Heart rate was measured continuously.

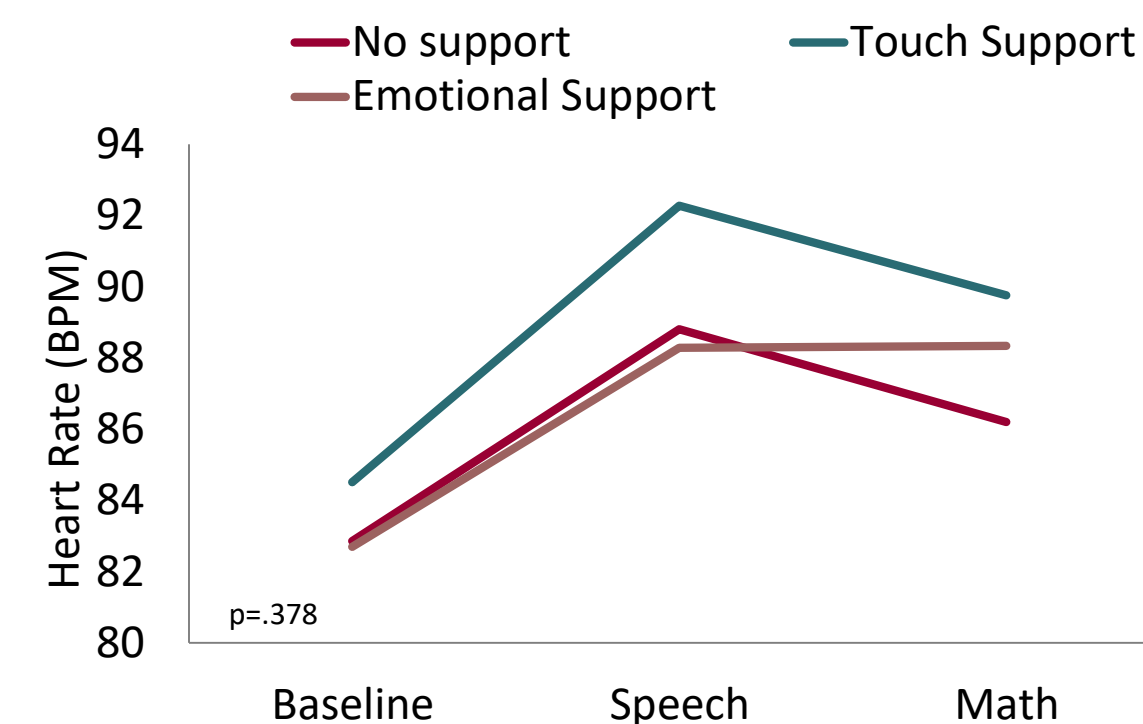
## Results

Perceived Stress by Social Support Condition and TSST

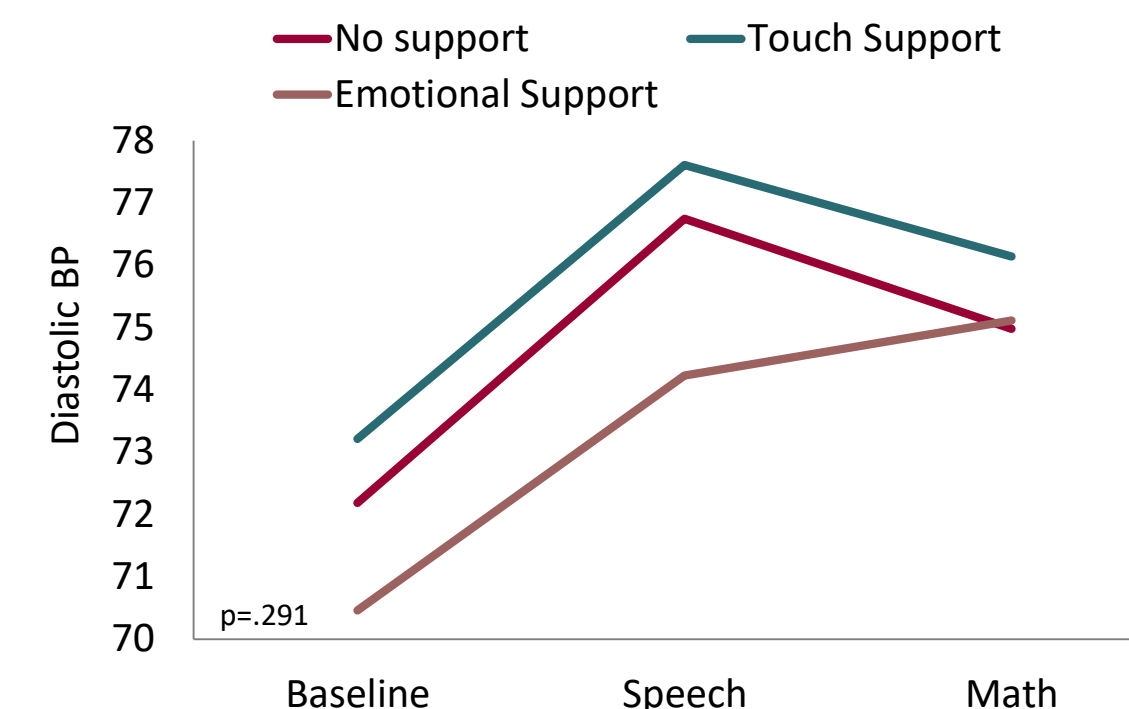


## Results Continued

### Change in Heart Rate



### Change in Diastolic Blood Pressure



## Discussion

### Limitations

- Participants were a convenience sample composed of mainly females.
- The condition was weakly manipulated and the stress test was too overpowering.

### Future Directions

- Make the imagined support specific to the stressful situation.
- Add an additional timepoint to see when people get back to their baseline.
- Examine gender differences and/or personality effects.