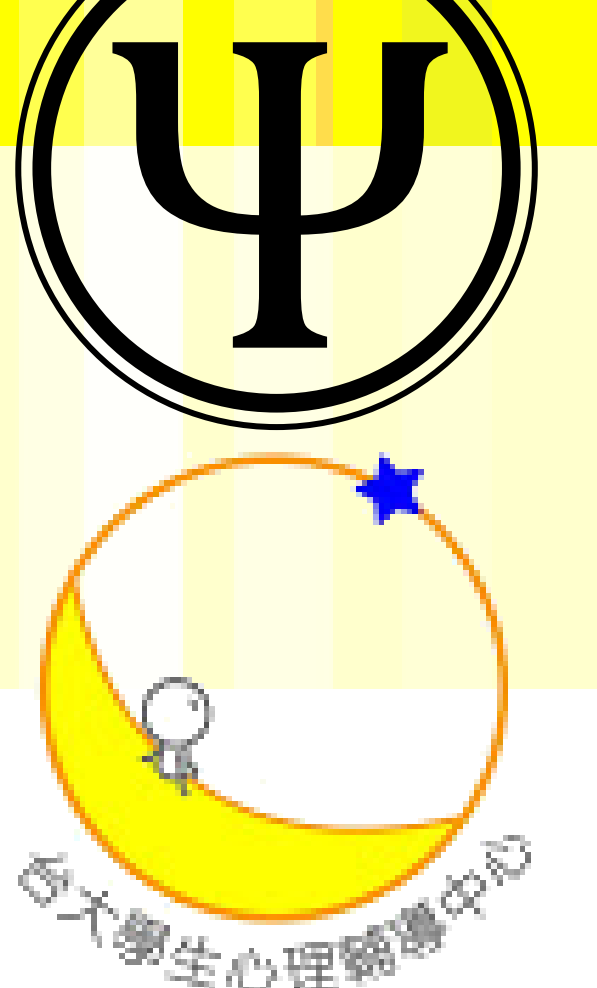




What Stress College Students Out? A comparison between Easterners and Westerners.



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Background & Aim

Research has suggested reliable cultural differences in the stress-coping process (Taylor, et al., 2004). Indeed, Markus & Kitayama (1991, 2010) posited the fundamental differences between Easterners and Westerners in the construction of self, which influenced viewing interpersonal relationships. Easterners tend to view a person as interdependent, define the self by relationships, and direct their own behaviors by context, while Westerners tend to view a person as independent and to define the self by internal fixed attributes that remain consistent across contexts.



Photo 1. westerners define themselves by their own attributes, while easterners view by interpersonal relationships

From: <http://goo.gl/CXwhux>

In the present study, we aimed at examining whether American and Taiwanese college students stressed out from different stressors. We hypothesized Taiwanese stressed more from interpersonal relationships, European Americans more from personal performances and problems, and Asian Americans were in-between.

Method

Subjects: Participants were 74 college students from a University at west coast of the United States, inclusion of 37 European Americans (EA), 37 East Asian Americans (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, and Korean; AA), and 100 local students from a University at Taiwan (TW). EA was representative of Westerners while AA and TW were representative of Easterners.



EA/Westerners

From : <http://goo.gl/6PE2fT>



AA/Easterners

From : <http://goo.gl/0VUjKc>



TW/Easterners

From : <https://goo.gl/Rhbj8L>

Methods: In the online survey, participants were required to write about the stressors they have experienced or been experiencing within the week. Types of Stressor, which were academic achievement, extracurricular activities (e.g., competitions, clubs, and part-time job), social life(e.g., relationships with friends and colleagues), romantic relationships, family relationships, financial problems, were rated by one researcher and two trained research assistants. We labeled academic achievement, extracurricular activities, and financial problems as personal performance stressors; social life, romantic relationships, and family relationships as interpersonal relationships stressors.

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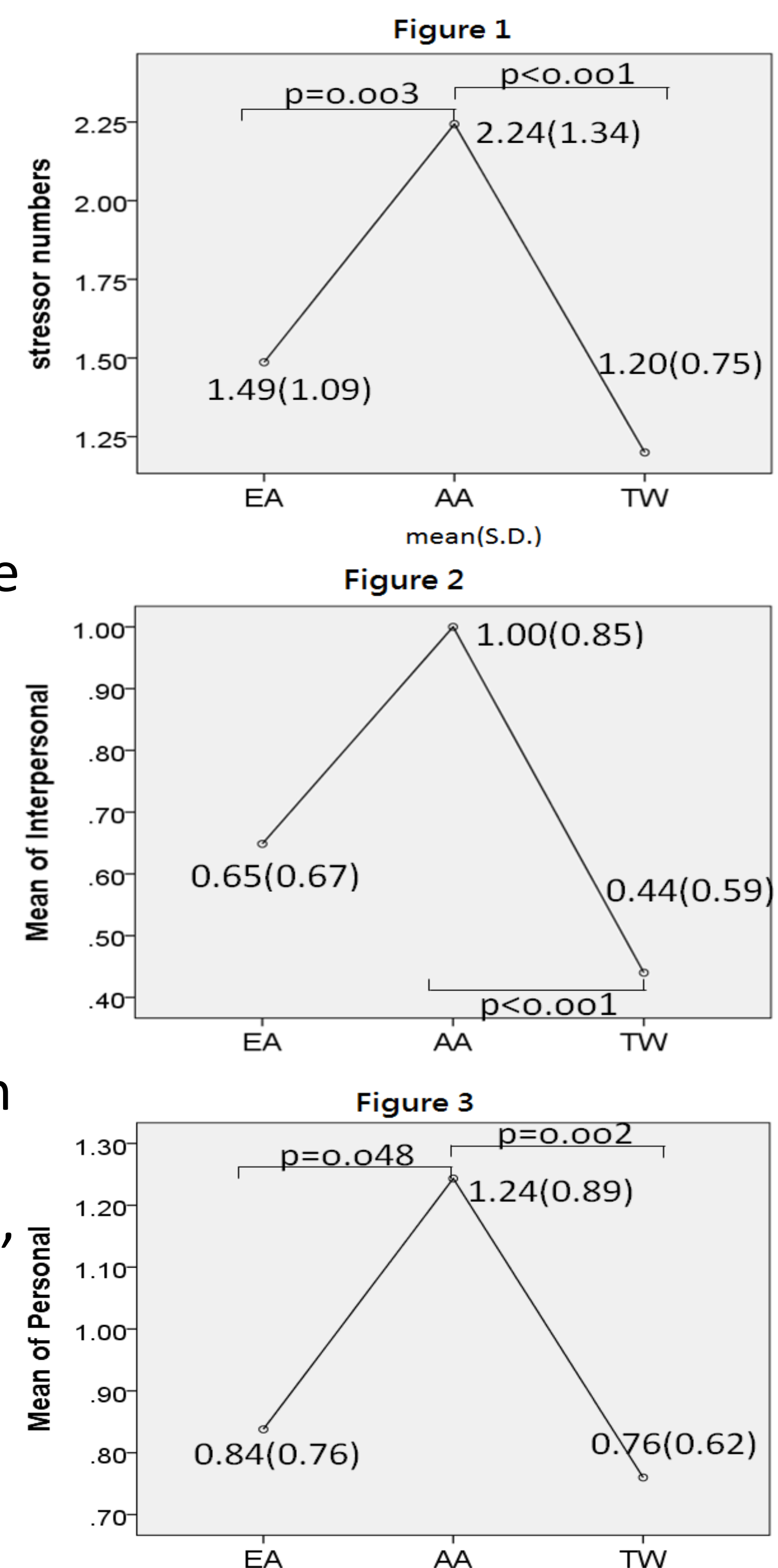
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Result

AA had significantly more stressors than EA and TW students ($F=15.3, p <.05$; figure 1). All of them stressed out on academic achievement. On many stressors (i.e., extracurricular activities, social life, romantic relationships, family relationships, and finance problem), larger portion of AA reported they had stressful feelings ($\chi^2 = 7.7, 8.0, 7.3, 10.3, \text{ and } 15.1, ps < .05$). In terms of interpersonal relationship stressors, there was difference between ethnicities ($F = 9.5, p <.001$). AA had more stress than TW (figure 2). In terms of personal performance stressors, there was also difference between ethnicities ($F = 6.2, p <.01$). AA had more stress than TW and EA (figure 3).



Discussion

The results were not consistent with our expectation generated from Markus & Kitayama's (1991, 2010). Easterners as AA, however, did not behave in between Westerners and local Easterners. Reasons may be that AAs often endured culture shocks, which we found in many participants' report, and made them most stressful in many fields. AA, as Easterners holding the interdependent selves, might stress out when internalizing the independent selves of Western society. Although differences in stressors revealed, students from different ethnic groups stressed out of academic performance. Since Taiwan is globalizing and AA are increasing in America, further research examining more detailed culture factors on mental health is needed.

Clinical Implication

First, academic stressors are pervasive among college students no matter what ethnicity they are. Thus, helping students cope with these stressors can be a main goal for school psychologists in psychological health promotion. Second, since culture shocks might influence students who came from a different ethnicity group, the psychological adjustment of foreign students in Taiwan should be taken into consideration.

References

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