

Introduction

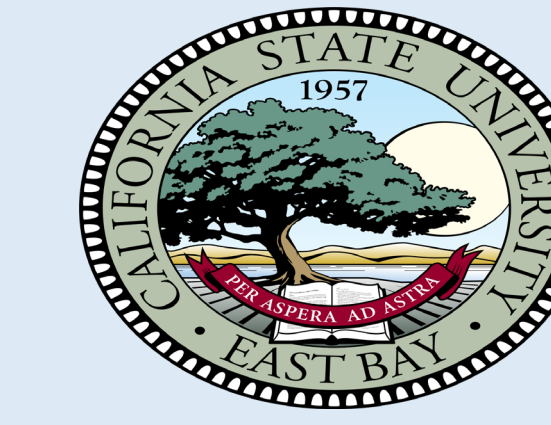
Previous research that has examined how people deal with stressful situations focuses on the role that self-control has in coping with these types of experiences. Previous research, however, typically utilizes data from White, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic populations (W.E.I.R.D.; Heinrich et al., 2010). To further understand the role self-control and other individual differences have on the experience of stressful situations among non-WEIRD individuals, the current study collected data from college students worldwide.

Method

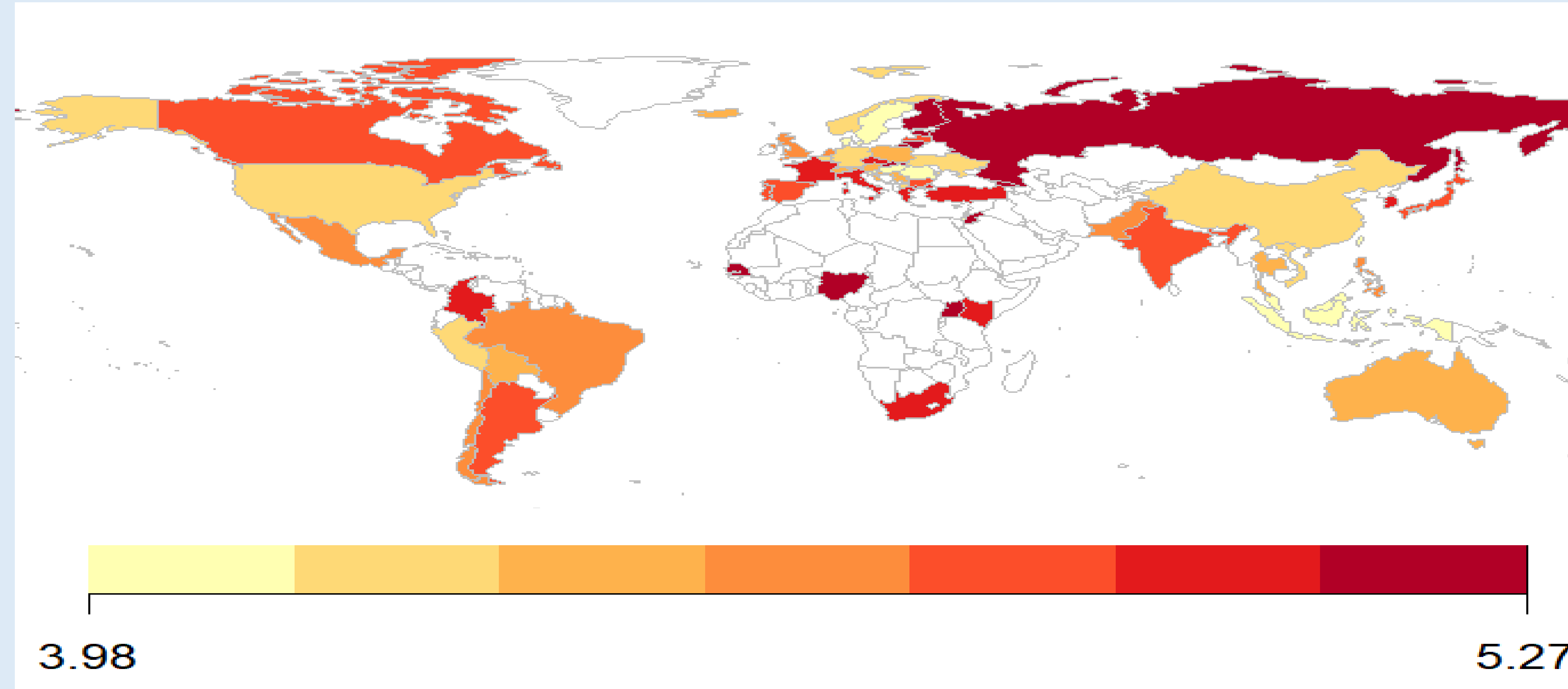
- 15,368 participants were recruited from 61 countries speaking 41 languages as part of the International Situations Project (ISP). Participants were first asked to complete 17 individual difference measures.
- Participants were assessed by their personality traits and reported a situation they remembered well from the last 24 hours. They quantified their situational experience using the Riverside Situational Qsort (Sauerberger et al., 2017) which assesses how characteristic 81 psychologically meaningful components of situations of their situation.
- We then created a subset (N = 277) of participants who rated a series of 'stressful aspects' characteristic of their reported situation:
 - RSQ15: Someone is under threat.
 - RSQ30: The situation could make people tense and upset.
 - RSQ32: The situation could make people feel hostile.
 - RSQ36: Emotional threats are present.
 - RSQ68: The situation could arouse negative emotions.

Stressful Situations in College Students Across the Globe.

James Washington & Erica Baranski,
California State University, East Bay



Experiences of Stressful Situations Around the World



Bottom behaviors associated with stressful situations

Behavior	Mean
I acted playful.	3.6
I behaved in a competitive manner.	3.6
I sought advice.	3.4
I said negative things about myself.	3.4
I engaged in physical activity.	3.2

Top behaviors associated with stressful situations

Behavior	Mean
I tried to control the situation.	6.0
Showed interest in what was being said.	5.3
I was being reserved and unexpressive.	4.8
I dominated the situation.	4.6
I spoke in a loud voice.	4.6

Relations between situational experience and anxiety

Situational Experiences	r
Potentially anxiety-inducing.	.15
Could arouse negative emotions.	.11
Could make you feel inadequate.	.10
Could cause small annoyances.	.09
Frustrating.	.08

Relations between situational experience and depression

Situational Experiences	r
Potentially anxiety-inducing.	.14
Could make you feel inadequate	.14
Could arouse negative emotions.	.11
Someone, or self, is unhappy or suffering	.11
Could cause small annoyances.	.10

Results

- Globally, results indicate that people experiencing stressful situations tend to score relatively high on the self-control facet of self-construal (M = 5.96, SD = 2.27, Range 1-7) and self-expression (M = 5.27, SD = 1.48, Range = 1-7) and happiness (M = 4.57, SD = 1.19, Range = 1-5).
- People scoring high in trait anxiety and depression tended to experience situations that were potentially anxiety-inducing ($r = .15$ and $r = .14$, respectively) and situations making the participants feel inadequate ($r = .10$ and $r = .14$, respectively). People high in depression also tended to experience situations where it made them, or someone else, suffer or be unhappy ($r = .11$).

Discussion

The participants biggest reaction to these stressful situations was to try to control the situation. For example, participants' most common personality trait was self-expression (M = 5.3). A stressful situation could cause someone to be more self-expressive than normal or less due to strong feelings of anxiety and depression. Across cultures, people seem to experience the same reactions to stressful situations and exhibit the same behaviors. Depending on your culture, self-expression could be seen as improper or as a strength. Helping those who are high in anxiety and depression know how to express themselves correctly in stressful situations could provide insight into the effects of cultural values across the globe.