

# Causes of stress, coping technique, and general outcome differ for Chinese and New Zealand Youth



## RESEARCH

*Does Brooding Rumination Moderate the Stress to Depression Relationship Similarly for Chinese and New Zealand Adolescents?*

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## Background

When under stress, people use a variety of techniques to manage the situation. The effectiveness of a chosen technique can be seen in psychological outcomes, such as depression.

Personality and culture can influence which technique people use to manage stress.

Some people cope with stress by focusing on the emotional aspect, repetitively thinking self-deprecating thoughts about one's abilities to manage distress. This is called brooding rumination.

Researchers associated with the Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Research, part of Victoria University of Wellington, studied the relationship between negative thoughts, stress, and depression in New Zealand and Chinese youth to determine if differences in stress triggers, coping techniques, and psychological outcomes exist.

## Main research findings

Chinese adolescents report more repetitive, negative thoughts and depression than NZ youth.

Chinese youth report more stress about grades and crowded living conditions, while NZ adolescents report more stress about physical appearance and parent conflict.

In both NZ and China, females and older adolescents reported more stress, more repetitive, negative thoughts, and more depression.

For adolescents who routinely deal with stress through repetitive, negative thoughts, the link between stress and depression is intensified. This relationship begins at an earlier age in NZ youth than Chinese youth.

Stress and repetitive, negative thoughts are stronger predictors of depression among NZ youth than Chinese.

## Relevance of findings to New Zealand

Educational counsellors, teachers, and administrators in multicultural schools need to be trained in culturally sensitive methodologies:

- Chinese youth appear to engage in more emotionally focused coping than NZ youth.
- Life stressors for Chinese and NZ youth may differ.
- Although not generally adaptive, repetitive self-denigrating thoughts appear to be more functional in the Chinese cultural context and more detrimental in the NZ setting.