

## Introduction

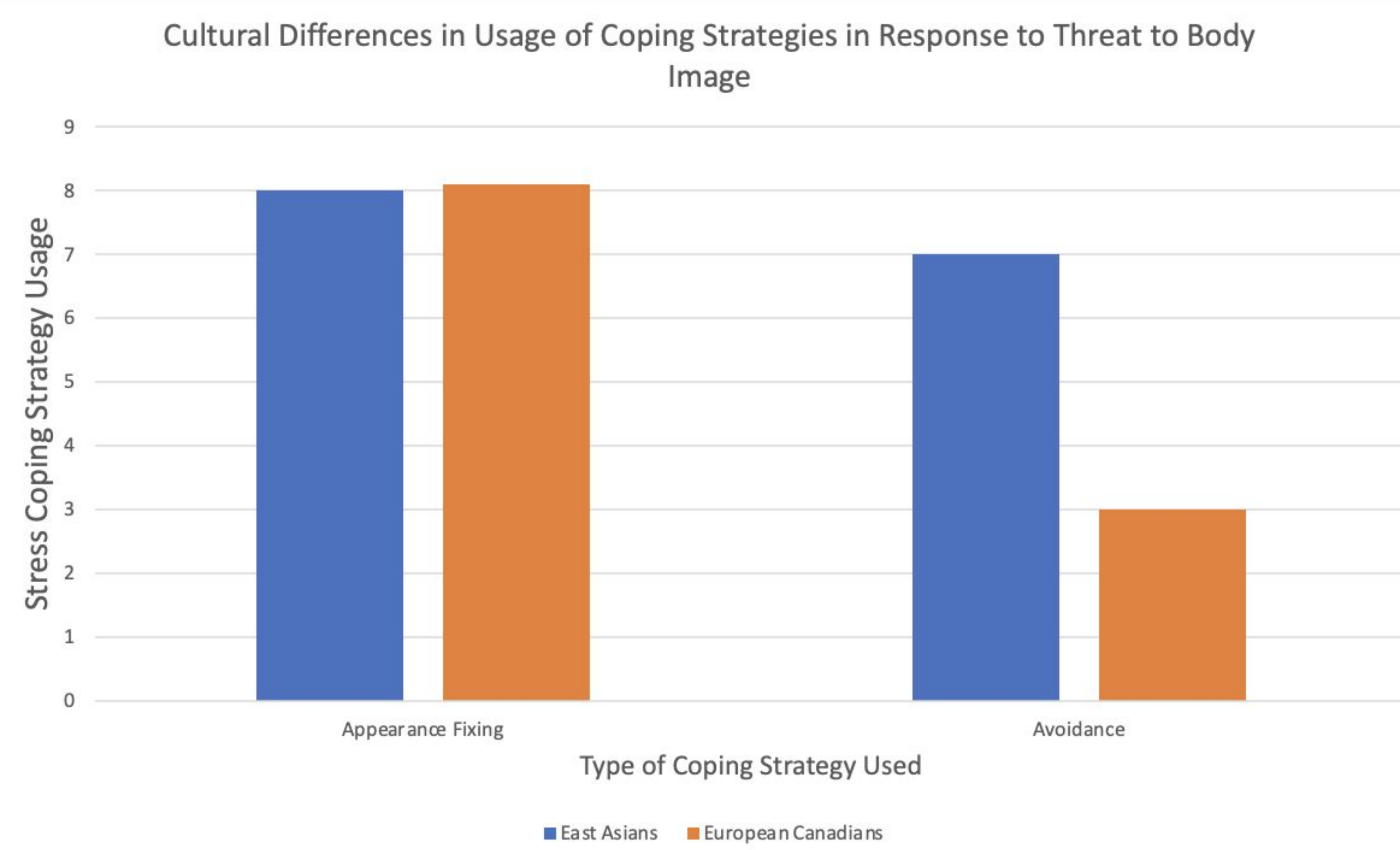
- About 1 million Canadians are diagnosed with an eating disorder<sup>3</sup>
- Threats to body image can be considered as manifestations of stress, and like any other stressor, should be coped with effectively to avoid negative effects
- Previous cross-cultural stress coping studies in response to general, daily life stressors found that:
  - European North Americans tend to endorse **primary coping** (changing the environment to fit own needs)<sup>2</sup>
  - East Asians tend to use **secondary coping** mechanisms (adjusting self to the environment)
  - East Asians tend to use more **avoidance coping** strategies (distracting oneself from the stressor)<sup>4</sup>
  - European North Americans tend to use more active, **approach-oriented coping** strategies (cognitive efforts aimed at finding a solution to the problem, understanding its causes, and accepting it)
  - The East Asian preference for secondary emotion-focused coping is explained by deeply-rooted values of maintaining interpersonal harmony, which may be disrupted through the usage of more direct strategies<sup>5</sup>
- No studies have examined cultural differences in body image coping strategies

- The Body Image Coping Strategies Inventory (BICSI) is a 36-item measure that identifies coping strategies used in response to threats to body image through 3 subscales<sup>1</sup>:
  1. **Appearance Fixing**- altering appearance by covering, camouflaging, or correcting perceived defect in appearance
  2. **Positive Rational Acceptance**- acceptance of the challenging event and positive self-care or rational self-talk about one's appearance
  3. **Avoidance**- attempt to escape stressful body-image situations

## Objectives & Hypotheses

- The objective of this study is to investigate the strategies individuals use to cope with threats to body image
- This research also aims to close the gap in stress coping literature by identifying cultural differences in body image coping specifically
- It is expected that East Asians will score higher than European Canadians on the avoidance subscale of the BICSI due to previous research findings that collectivistic cultures tend to endorse more avoidant coping strategies in response to stress, compared to more individualist cultures<sup>4</sup>
- It is also hypothesized that appearance fixing will be a common body image coping strategy in both cultures, however, no significant differences in the usage of appearance fixing strategies are expected between the two cultures

## Expected Results



## Methods

### Participants:

- ~100 European Canadian students at the University of Alberta
- ~100 East Asian international students at the University of Alberta

### Procedure:

- Participants will complete the Body Image Coping Strategies Inventory (BICSI) by indicating on a 7-point Likert scale, how likely they are to use each coping strategy in response to a threat to body image

Examples of items from the BICSI:

- "I make a special effort to hide or cover up what's troublesome about my looks"
- "I tell myself that there are more important things than what I look like"

## Implications

- Given the prevalence and severity of eating disorders, it is essential to gain more knowledge on coping strategies to intervene early.
- Mental health practitioners, especially those practicing in multicultural societies like Canada treating diverse populations, would benefit from the current research, as it offers insight into cultural norms and behaviour. This cultural awareness is essential to provide high-quality, well-rounded treatment of body/eating related disorders by understanding clients' cultural values, needs, and coping skills.
- The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) places a strong emphasis on cultural competencies in practice.
- The study helps close the gap in literature by studying an area not covered in cross-cultural psychology.
- Addresses the lack of research from non-WEIRD (Western, Economic, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) countries.

## References

- <sup>1</sup>Cash, T.F., Santos, M.T., Williams, E.F. (2005). Coping with body-image threats and challenges: Validation of the body image coping strategies inventory. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 58(2), 190-199. 10.1016/j.jpsychores.2004.07.0
- <sup>2</sup>Han, J.Y., Lee, H., Ohtsubo, Y., Masuda, T. (2022). Culture and stress coping: Cultural variations in the endorsement of primary and secondary control coping for daily stress across European Canadians, East Asian Canadians, and the Japanese. *Japanese Psychological Research*. <https://doi-org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/10.1111/jpr.12406>
- <sup>3</sup>National Eating Disorder Information Centre. *National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC)*. <https://nedic.ca/>
- <sup>4</sup>Sheu, H., & Sedlacek, W.H. (2004). An exploratory study of help-seeking attitudes and coping strategies among college students by race and gender. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counselling and Development*, 37(3), 130-143. <https://10.1080/07481756.2004.11909755>
- <sup>5</sup>Yamaguchi, S. (2001). Culture and Control Orientations. In D. Matsumoto (Ed.), *The handbook of culture & psychology* (pp. 223-243). Oxford University Press.