Diversity in Eating Disorders

Eating Disorders Don’t Discriminate!

Culture, Race & Ethnicity

- The rate of eating disorders is similar among Non-Hispanic Whites, Hispanics, African-Americans, and Asians in the United States, with the exception that anorexia nervosa is more common among Non-Hispanic Whites (Hudson et al., 2007; Wade et al., 2011).

LGBTQ Community

- 15 percent of gay & bisexual men reported having a full or sub-threshold eating disorder at some point in their life, versus 4.6 percent of straight males
- Gay males are 7x more likely to binge & 12x more likely to purge than straight males
- Members of the LGBTQ community are at a higher risk of developing bulimia and anorexia nervosa
- In the United States, approximately 3% of men identify as being gay or bisexual; however, studies show that up to 42% of men who present with eating disorders identify as being gay or bisexual
- Lesbian women report higher levels of self-esteem regarding their body & sexual attractiveness. They also have a decreased tendency to adopt cultural standards for physical appearance

Age & Eating Disorders

While it was once believed that eating & body image concerns were limited to adolescent or young adult females, research tells us that in the past decades?

- More women of diverse ages are admitting that they struggle with body image & disordered eating
- While the reasons for this are complex & not yet fully understood, we know that in today’s contemporary society, women experience unprecedented stress due to:
- Rapidly changing roles in a globalized consumer culture
- Strict cultural standards regarding women, weight, & appearance
- Unattainable media images
- Current fear of obesity

Ways body image & disordered eating may “look” different for older populations:
- Shame & embarrassment for having a “teenager’s problem”?
- More years speaking the “language of fat”?
- Greater difficulty admitting the need for help
- More motivation for treatment
- Greater awareness of what they have lost due to their eating or body image issues
- More obstacles to treatment due to other responsibilities
- Increased anxiety about appearance/health due to natural aging process
- Multiple stressors & losses that accompany adult development.

Adapted from https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/whats-age-got-do-it [1]
Adapted from: The Body Myth: Adult Women and the Pressure To Be Perfect by Maine & Kelly (John Wiley, 2005)

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