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Body Image, Eating Disorders and Psychiatric Comorbidity:

The interplay of body image and
psychiatry

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Definitions

- Hilda Bruch (1962)-credited as first to identify body image disturbance as intricate piece of pathology of eating disorders.
- Cash and Deagle distinguish between perceptual distortion and attitudinal body image.
- Both appear distorted in women in ED.



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Self-Discrepancy Theory

- Higgins (1987)
- “Magnitude of the disparity between self-perceived physical attributes and internalized ideals is conceptually and empirically related to body dissatisfaction and eating disturbances among both clinical and nonclinical samples.”

Strauman, Timothy J et al. *Self-Discrepancies and Vulnerability to Body Dissatisfaction and Disordered Eating*. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 1991. Vole. 61, No 6, 946-956.



Epidemiology

- 1/2 of all teenage girls and 1/3 of teenage boys use weight control behaviors such as skipping meals, fasting, smoking cigarettes, vomiting and taking laxatives.
- 25% of college-age women engage in bingeing and purging as a weight-management technique.
- 91% of women surveyed on a college campus had attempted to control their weight through dieting. 22% dieted “often” or “always.”



Epidemiology

(continued)

- 47% of 5th – 12th grade girls reported wanting to lose weight because of magazine pictures.
- 69% of 5th – 12th grade girls said that magazine pictures influenced their idea of a perfect body shape.
- 42% of 1st – 3rd grade girls wanted to be thinner.
- 81% of 10 year-olds are afraid of being fat.



Body Image and Race/Ethnicity/Culture

- In a study completed by van den Berg et al, they examined 4,746 adolescents 11 – 18 y.o and examined the relationship between body dissatisfaction and self-esteem.
- All groups have some relationship between body image and self-esteem.
- However, AAF have higher rates of self-esteem and lower body dissatisfaction than other racial/ethnic groups. AAF also had a weaker association between body image and self-esteem.



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Body Image and Race/Ethnicity/Culture

- Asian women also appear to have a weaker relationship between body satisfaction and self-esteem compared to white girls but overall had lower self-esteem and higher body dissatisfaction than many other racial/ethnic groups.

Van den Berg, Patricia A. et al. *The Link Between Body Dissatisfaction and Self-Esteem in Adolescents: Similarities across Gender, Age, Weight Status, Race/ethnicity, and Socioeconomic Status*. Journal of Adolescent Health 2010. Vol 47.



Socioeconomic Status

- Higher SES predicts greater association between body satisfaction and self-esteem.
- Compared to white, upper SES females, Asian and lower SES females have lower self-esteem scores and higher body dissatisfaction scores but the association between the two is weaker.

Van den Berg, Patricia A. et al. *The Link Between Body Dissatisfaction and Self-Esteem in Adolescents: Similarities across Gender, Age, Weight Status, Race/ethnicity, and Socioeconomic Status*. Journal of Adolescent Health 2010. Vol 47.



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Body Image and Eating Disorders

- Well established link
- Strauman et al, found self-discrepancy forms a strong basis for vulnerability to body dissatisfaction and maladaptive eating behaviors.

Strauman, Timothy J. Self-Discrepancies and Vulnerability to Body Dissatisfaction and Disordered Eating. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 1991. Vol. 61, No. 6, 946-956.



Body Image and Eating Disorders

- Stice postulates a dual model of bulimic pathology.
- Internalization of pressure to be thin + thin-ideal internalization → body dissatisfaction → dieting and negative affect → bulimic symptomatology.
- Even without body dissatisfaction, merely pressure to be thin can lead directly to negative affect and dieting.

Stice, Eric. *A Prospective Test of the Dual-Pathway Model of Bulimic Pathology: Mediating Effects of Dieting and Negative Affect*. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. 2001. Vol 110. No. 1, 124-135.



Body Image and Depression

- In a longitudinal analysis of 1,124 HS students, Stice et al found that body dissatisfaction, dietary restraint and bulimic symptoms (but not body mass) all predicted the later development of depression among participants initially classified as non-depressed.
- Conflicting research may suggest that there is a feedback relationship between negative affect and bulimic pathology whereby they reinforce one another.

Stice, E. et al. *Body Image and Eating Disturbances Predict Onset of Depression Among Female Adolescents: A Longitudinal Study*. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. 2000. Vol. 109. No. 3, 438-444.



Body Image and Depression

- Noles et al followed 224 college men and women who underwent affective and cognitive measures.
- Depressed individuals: less satisfied with their bodies.
- Felt they were less physically attractive as compared to non-depressed subjects.
- Groups were rated as equally attractive by independent viewers.
- Interestingly, non-depressed subjects were found to overestimate their attractiveness.



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Body Image and Substance Use

- Survey 646 tenth grade females in Northern, CA.
- Among the 10.3% who met criteria for bulimia and 10.4% who reported purging behaviors for weight control, all reported higher rates of drunkenness, MJ use, cigarette use and greater levels of depressive symptoms.

Killen, Joel D. et al. *Depressive Symptoms and Substance Use among Adolescent Binge Eaters and Purgers: A Defined Population Study*. American Journal of Public Health. 1987. Vol. 77, No. 12.



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Opportunities for Intervention

- Body image can be used as a screening tool for depression/eating disorders.
- Study the cultural attitudes of ethnic/racial groups who have successfully uncoupled body image from self-esteem.
- Increase awareness