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Race and Disordered Eating: A Narrative Review of Current Literature

**Casey Swann, MsEd, Lee Pachter, DO,
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Clinical Background

- Eating disorder treatment: compounded problems
 - Minorities face higher burden of unidentified eating disorders^{1,2}



**LESS THAN 50%
OF EATING DISORDER
SUFFERERS GET THE
TREATMENT THEY NEED**

Nonetheless, prognosis with treatment is good, particularly when initiated during the early stages of illness. The dissemination of effective and acceptable treatments for eating disorders is fundamental to improving the quality of life of hundreds of millions of individuals globally.

Eating Disorders by the Numbers



Females were almost five times more likely to be diagnosed with an eating disorder than males.



White students were nearly two times more likely to be diagnosed with an eating disorder than students of color.



Females were almost 1.5 times more likely to get treatment compared with males.

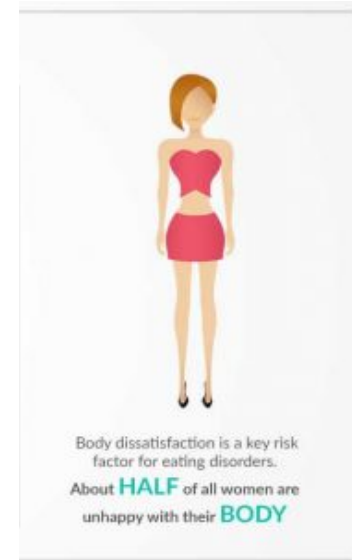


Affluent students were nearly two times more likely to get treatment compared to nonaffluent students.

- Screening relies on symptomatology, not risk
- Improvements to screening tools should include assessments of risk, including risk for minority patients

Background on the literature: what do we know

- **Pathogenesis:** multifactorial
- Trauma is a well-established risk factor in the literature
 - Focus on sexual abuse and physical abuse
 - Racism as a form of trauma is overlooked
- **Inquiry Question:** what are the current findings regarding associations between racial stressors and disordered eating?



THERE IS NO ONE KNOWN CAUSE OF EATING DISORDERS ?

THE MEDIA, SOCIETY, FAMILY & PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS



Are believed to affect weight concerns and promote disordered eating behaviors. A preliminary aspect of treatment may involve addressing motivation, engagement, and "readiness to change."

BULIMIA NERVOSA AND BINGE-EATING DISORDER TEND TO RUN IN FAMILIES



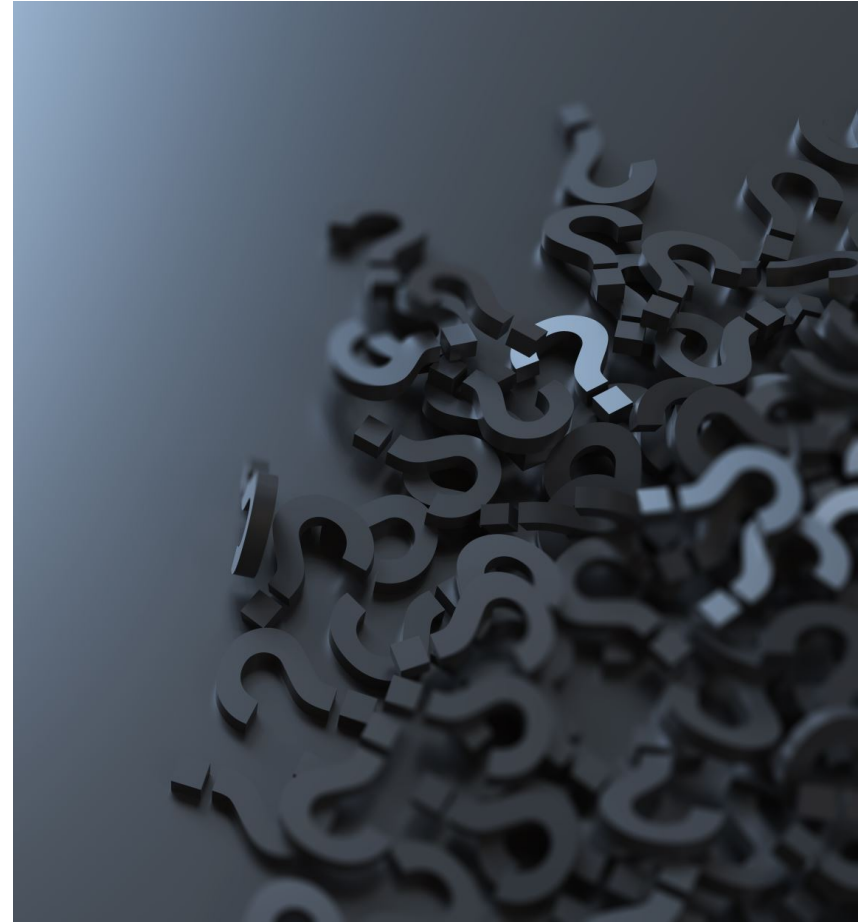
This suggests either genetic transmission or shared psychological factors affecting family members. Anorexia alone is 56% determined by genetics.

The State of the Literature:

- Lack of research on minority populations with eating disorders
- Transdiagnostic construct of disordered eating for minorities rather than DSM-V diagnoses
- Limited study designs

Methods

- Narrative Review using PRISMA methods for literature selection
- Multiple minority populations represented:
 - Asian Americans
 - African Americans
 - Hispanic Americans
 - Native Americans
- **Time Frame:** Nov 2007 - August 2020
- **Databases:** PubMed, CINAHL, PsycInfo
- Data regarding conflict in racial identity and disordered eating

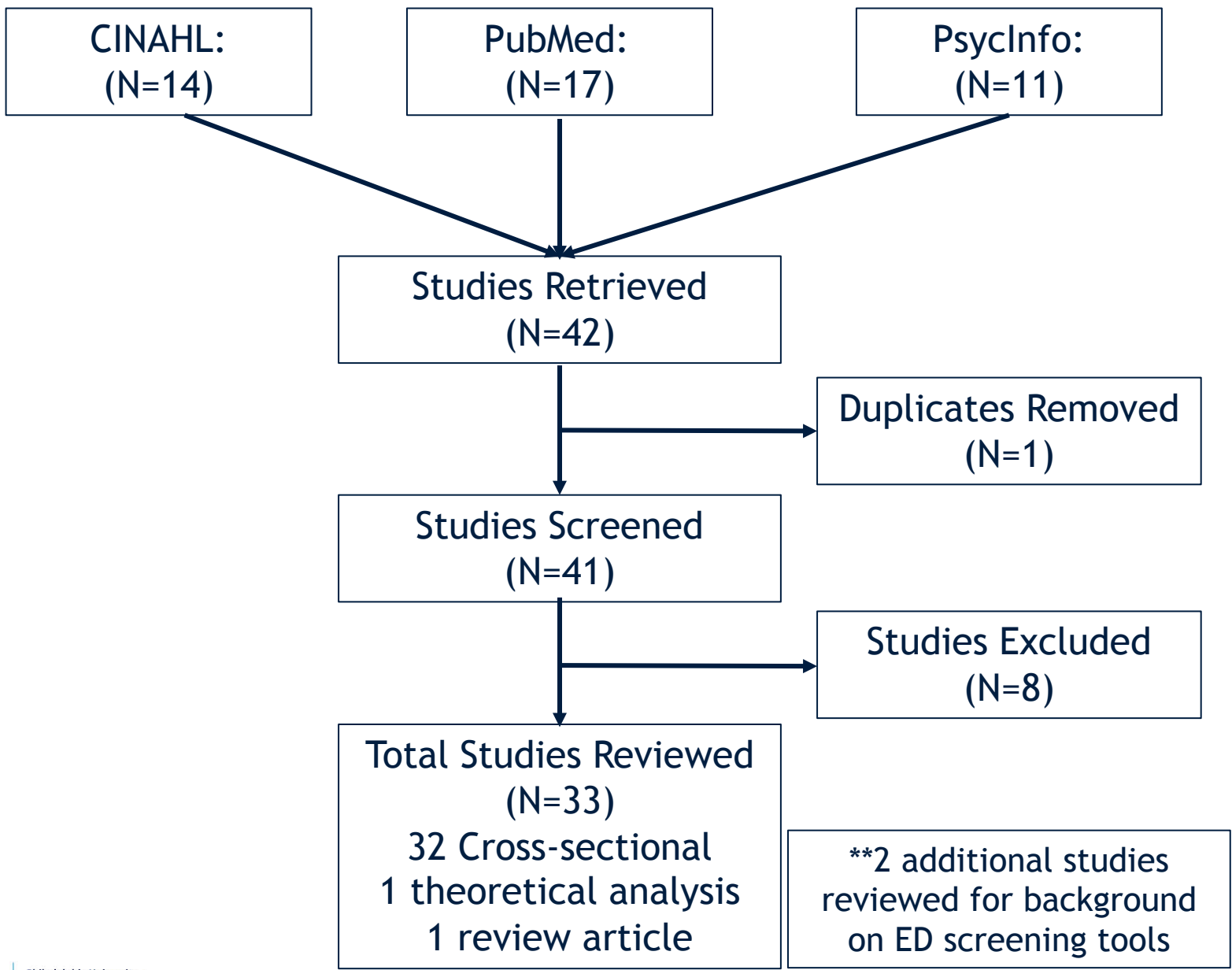


Identification

Screening

Eligibility

Included



Results

- Perceived racism consistently associated with disordered eating, especially for minority women
 - Mediating factor: self-reported stress



- Racial teasing positively associated with disordered eating, disturbed body image and depressive symptoms
 - Multiple races
 - Primarily among females
- No definitive conclusion about trauma from racism as a risk factor; more focused research is required.

Conclusions...

For clinical practice



- Assess for racial stress
 - Potential factor contributing to physical and mental health outcomes for minority patients, especially among minority women
- Assess for eating disorders regardless of racial background

Limitations

- Population
 - Primarily college students
 - No clinically-diagnosed eating disorder populations
- Design:
 - No longitudinal studies
 - Primarily cross-sectional methodology

About the literature

- Need for longitudinal prospective studies examining eating disorder populations, especially minority populations
- Need for longitudinal prospective studies of relevant risk factors for minority populations
- Studies about eating disorder screening practices in various settings regarding different minorities

Disclosures and Acknowledgements

- No disclosures
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Additional Resources

1. Fitzsimmons-Craft EE, Karam AM, Monterubio GE, Taylor CB, Wilfley DE. Screening for Eating Disorders on College Campuses: a Review of the Recent Literature. *Curr Psychiatry Rep.* 2019;21(10):101. Published 2019 Sep 14. doi:10.1007/s11920-019-1093-1
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**Images and infographics cited in slide notes.



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