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Exploring Gender Differences in Eating Disorder Risk Factors

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ABSTRACT

Body dissatisfaction, social appearance anxiety, and thinness and restricting expectancies are well-established risk factors for eating disorder pathology. Little research has examined the differences in said risk factors by gender. Gender-based research has been further limited by only looking at cisgender identities (e.g., cisgender women and men). Understanding this relationship between gender and these factors can be an important consideration for the greater sociocultural factors that affect our society and eating disorders, and therefore should also influence our treatment of them. Current study examined differences in social appearance anxiety, body dissatisfaction, and thinness and restricting expectancies upon college-aged students (N = 2719). Study used analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare means in TREI, SAAS, and EPSI body dissatisfaction across gender identities. Also conducted post-hoc analyses with Bonferroni correction for multiple comparison. There were significant differences across gender identities in TREI, EPSI, and SAAS ($p < .001$). Overall, cis men demonstrate lower levels of body dissatisfaction, social appearance anxiety, and thinness and restricting expectancies as compared to cis women and trans individuals. Trans individuals demonstrate elevated scores on risk factors as compared to cis men and cis women except on SAAS. Suggest that cis women and trans individuals experience similar levels of heightened anxiety around appearance-based judgment.