ABSTRACT

It has been reported that homosexuality is a risk factor for males with anorexia. However, it is unclear whether it is a specific risk factor for eating pathology or just a common risk factor associated with psychopathology. If social stigmatization of homosexuality can cause general psychological suffering that expresses itself as a discomfort with sexual orientation, poor self-esteem, depression, and disordered eating, then homosexuality may act as a general risk factor in itself. It can also be interrelated to certain aspects that distinctively increase the risk for males developing anorexia, such as increased identification with the male gender roles (Murmen & Smolak, 1997) or even an amplified pressure to maintain a thin physique in order to attract a male partner (Epel, Spankos, Kael-Godley, & Brownell 1969).

The identification of risk factors for the development of body image disturbance and anorexia has been an active area of interest (Thompson & Smolak, 2001). Recently there has been much investigating in to the causes of anorexia in females ageing from childhood all the way to adulthood, but the same cannot be said for males or why there is an increased number of homosexual males whom suffer from this disorder. This is why it is so important to expand our research for gender-specific factors for boys and males and how sexual orientation plays a part in this.

INTRODUCTION

Anorexia nervosa is classified as a serious mental disorder depicted by unbecoming low body weights, a relentless sense of thinness, and distorted cognitions about body weight and shape. Anorexia nervosa generally begins during middle to late adolescence. However, this previous statement has described this onset in prepubertal children and older adults; anorexia nervosa also has an elevated mortality rate.

Even though eating disorders affect everyone, there is very little literature and treatment options to address issues that are specific to the male eating disorder community. Unfortunately, there is an element of shame in being someone with any type of eating disorder, which makes it more difficult for them to seek treatment. It is especially harder for men to admit they have this disorder due to the misconceptions that they cannot suffer from an eating disorder, as it is a female disorder. Another problem affecting males with anorexia is their sexual orientation as the male gay community places a lot of pressure on the importance of successful appearance. This statement is not meant to make light on the fact that there are still many heterosexual males who still suffer as well.

METHODS

- Reviewed over 50 Peer Reviewed Journals.
- Drew Conclusions from previous studies.
- Summarized and synthesized the data reviewed.

THEORY

Since the available sources of research studies and literature on anorexia are almost completely female orientated, it is impossible to depict a clear parallel of treatment methods with today’s diagnostic techniques for both genders. This why it is imperative assist these individuals through science and research.

DATA

- Anorexia was first discovered by one of Queen Victoria’s personal physicians, Sir William Gull in 1873 (Gull WW, September 1997); although, Richard Mottor is credited with being the first physician to use medical descriptions of this condition in 1689 according to J.M.S. Pearce, 2004.
- Western countries report that homosexual males are at a greater risk to develop an eating disorder than heterosexual males; as eating disorders in homosexual males and disordered eating attitudes are considerably more common than heterosexual males (Andersen, 1999; Brand, Rothblum, & Solonson, 1992).
- During Hopson and Jansen’s 2005 study that involved two groups of males with anorexia, one being of heterosexual males and the other group of homosexual males, reported that the relationship between peer pressure and body dissatisfaction was significantly more prominent among the homosexual males.

REFERENCES


