

## **Psychological Factors of Eating Disorders and Resilience in College Females**

*Julia Franklin Summerhays, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT*

Weight concerns and disordered eating are common among female college students. Summerhays (2008) found that 83% of college females were "underweight" or "normal weight" based on BMI, yet 87% indicated they wanted to lose weight. Laska, Pasch, Lust, Story, and Ehlinger (2011) found 16.7% of female college students reported engaging in binge eating behavior a few times per year or more, 68% reported they were trying to lose weight, and 13.1% reported taking laxatives, diet pills, or inducing vomiting as a means of losing weight. These attitudes and behaviors put women at risk for developing an eating disorder (ED).

Research indicates that resilient qualities and the ability to positively adapt have a preventive effect on ED development (Butters & Cash, 1987; Cook-Cottone & Phelps, 2003). To develop resilient qualities and learn how to positively adapt, Richardson (2002) suggests that a "motivational energy" is required. This energy, or "core resilience" (Shores, 2004), refers to a driving force within all humans to seek the realization of their true potential. Summerhays (2008) found a significant, although weak, negative correlation between core resilience and risk for developing an ED based on drive for thinness, bulimic characteristics and body dissatisfaction. These three constructs are commonly used to determine ED risk, but Garner (2004) identified nine psychological factors relevant to, but not specific to, EDs that should also be considered. The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the relationship between core resilience and psychological factors relevant to eating disorders in college females.

Female students (N = 254), ages 18-25, from a large university in the Mountain West completed two self-report instruments: the Eating Disorder Inventory-3 (Garner, 2004), which measures psychological characteristics of an eating disorder and the Assessment of Core Resilience (Shores, 2004), designed to measure an individual's core resilience.

Results revealed that core resilience had a moderate negative relationship with low self-esteem, personal alienation, interpersonal insecurity, interpersonal alienation, and interoceptive deficits ( $r = -.512, -.621, -.506, -.622, -.525$ , respectively) and a low negative relationship with emotional dysregulation and maturity fears ( $r = -.456, -.307$ , respectively).

Findings indicated that core resilience was associated with psychological factors that are highly relevant to EDs. Further exploration of this relationship and the preventive effect of core resilience on EDs is warranted.

Learner objectives include: 1) understanding core resilience and the psychological factors that are highly relevant to EDs; and 2) knowledge of the relationship between these constructs.