

# Maladaptive Eating Behaviors In Hispanic Women Research & Literature Review.

Claire K. Hughes

Brinson Honors College, CATS For Body Empowerment

## ABSTRACT

The White Medical Model still takes priority in a diverse world. Most of research is done on Caucasian individuals, little to no minority groups are properly represented within academic research. I plan to discuss maladaptive eating behaviors, within literature and how it compares to bodily appreciation, disordered eating, and objectification data I collected through various psychological measures.

Literature used within this presentation will be *“Dreaming in Cuban”* By Cristina Garcia, academic research articles, non-academic online blogs. We will also compare the literary comments on disordered eating with my psychological research on disordered eating in Hispanic women, with a focus on objectification. We will then go over how this information can be used within the medical field, psychology field, and day to day socialization.

## INTRO / GOALS / OBJECTIVES

One objective of this research is to show how disordered eating varies by culture and should be treated on a case-by-case basis and not using one model of treatment.

Another objective is to compare my own academic research done through the Cats for Body Empowerment Lab, a health psychology lab here on campus, to literary media found within books, blogs, other academic research, etc.



Illustration by Zoe Hansen for Verywell Health

## RESEARCH METHODS

I collected data on bodily appreciation, sexual objectification, disordered eating behaviors, and how the participants thought on the usage of the words “torta” and “pan dulce” being used to describe the bodies of Hispanic women.

50 individuals who identified as a women or feminine presenting and identified as Hispanic took my survey via QR code or internet recruitment.

Demographics tracked within my survey consisted of age, gender, If they have lived a transgender experience, ethnicity, education, mother’s education, languages spoken, marital status, weight, and height. The mean age of my participants was 20.53.

Measures that I used within my survey were the Interpersonal Sexual Objectification scale, Eating Disorder Diagnostic Scale, and the Body Appreciation Scale.

## LITERARY THEMES OF DISORDERED EATING

Hispanic literature has a lot of themes of disordered eating and body image issues within the media. One of my favorite examples is the Novel *“Dreaming in Cuban”* By Christina Garcia. One of the main characters within this novel, Lourdes, displays a struggle with her weight throughout the whole novel.

Throughout the novel, Lourdes is shown using food as a coping mechanism for traumatic events. (Insert text from book where she overeats due to fathers' death). Lourdes also loses a lot of weight throughout the novel by not eating or drinking anything, and when Lourdes finally eats again in the novel, she loses control. “By Thanksgiving, Lourdes has lost 118 pounds. She's still barely eating and astonishes Pilar with her new, slender body. But at dinner, she decides to have a little piece of turkey, and her appetite returns. She can't stop eating after that.” (Garcia 182).

## RESULTS

Multiple participants have self reported that they have fasted (skipping 2+ meals) in the study. The mean average was M=3.98, so on average, the participants have fasted around 4 times a week to lose weight.

I also took data on episodes of binge eating within the past three months. Participants self reported a mean average of M=2.23. The participants have reported that on average they have engaged in uncontrollable binge eating 2.23 times over the past three months.

I ran a correlation between bodily appreciation and sexual objectification. Results I got was the more sexual objectification occurred, the less bodily appreciation one had for themselves.

### Correlations

		BMI	BAS_tot al	O_Total
BMI	Pearson Correlation	1	-.289	.071
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.057	.647
	N	44	44	44
BAS_total	Pearson Correlation	-.289	1	-.391**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.057		.009
	N	44	44	44
O_Total	Pearson Correlation	.071	-.391**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.647	.009	
	N	44	44	44

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, with examples from my psychological research and literary evidence, disordered eating exists within different cultures. The knowledge that disordered eating exists in different ethnic groups is extremely important. This knowledge can be used to improve psychological treatment of the disorders and improve general knowledge of disordered eating.

I would like to continue my research but focus more on disordered eating and how this disorder interacts with familial settings, such as family gatherings, reunions, holidays, etc.

## References

- Garcia, Chistina *“Dreaming in Cuban”* 1992
- Rogers, C., Hughes, C. (2025, March) *Disordered eating and body image in Latinx women.*