

ABNORMALITY: BECKER
PSYCHOLOGICAL CAUSES OF ANOREXIA NERVOSA

Aim: to investigate the influence of cultural factors on the incidence of anorexia nervosa by taking advantage of cultural change when television was first introduced to the island of Fiji to see what effects western TV would have on attitudes towards eating and the incidence of anorexia nervosa

Procedures:

- In 1993 when TV was first introduced to the island of Fiji, 63 native Fijian girls were asked to complete a questionnaire on attitudes towards eating and were questioned about their TV viewing habits
- 2/3 years later, a further sample of 65 girls aged 17 years on average were re-questioned to assess the impact of TV on their eating habits. Girls were also interviewed about their views on eating and television

Findings:

- % of girls who reported vomiting in order to control weight changed from 3% in 1993 to 15% in 1995
- Girls with a high score on the eating questionnaire (indicating a risk of disordered eating) changed from 13% in 1993 to 29% in 1995

Conclusions:

- The findings indicate a strong link between exposure to western ideals of thinness and changed attitudes towards eating.
- Such changed attitudes are likely to lead to the development of eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa

Criticisms:

- The findings do not necessarily demonstrate a cause
This was a natural experiment during which the investigators had no control over extraneous variables
- Changed attitudes may not lead to eating disorders - we do not all show signs of eating disorders even if we are all exposed to the same cultural influences, there may well be a biological vulnerability