

**ABNORMALITY: KENDLER ET AL.
BULIMIA GENETIC STUDY**

Aim:

To establish the prevalence (number of cases) of bulimia and to see whether there were genetic risk factors

Procedures:

- ❑ 2,163 female twins were given personal, structured, psychiatric interviews
- ❑ The twins were assessed for psychiatric disorders
- ❑ The risk factors for bulimia nervosa were recorded

Findings:

- ❑ The prevalence of bulimia nervosa was 2.8% of those interviewed
- ❑ Risk factors for bulimia included: being born after 1960, poor parental care; dieting and fluctuating weight; slim ideal body image; low self-esteem; feeling a lack of control over one's life
- ❑ In identical (MZ) twins, concordance was 23%
- ❑ In non-identical (DZ) twins, concordance was 8.7%

Conclusions:

- ❑ There are genetic risk factors involved in bulimia nervosa
- ❑ There are also other important risk factors, for example relating to age and childhood experiences

Criticisms:

- ❑ Compared with many twin studies, this investigation involved quite a large number of participants
- ❑ The higher concordance rates among identical twins may be caused by the similar ways in which they were treated by family and friends, rather than by their genetic similarity
- ❑ People may not inherit a risk for bulimia (or anorexia) but rather a risk of developing an obsessional personality which makes them susceptible to eating disorders under certain circumstances