

STRESS: FRIEDMAN & ROSENHAN
STRESS AND CARDIOVASCULAR DISORDERS

Aim: to investigate the links between Type A behaviour pattern and cardiovascular (heart) disease

Procedures:

- ❑ Using structured interviews, 3,200 California men, aged 39 to 59, were categorised as either Type A, Type X (balanced between Type A and Type B) or Type B (the opposite of Type A i.e. more relaxed and not showing Type A characteristics of time pressure, competitiveness and anger)
- ❑ This large sample was followed up for 8 and a half years to assess their lifestyle and health outcomes

Findings:

- ❑ By the end of the study, 257 men in the sample had developed coronary heart disease (CHD), of which 70% were from the Type A group – twice the rate of heart disease found in the Type B group.
- ❑ This difference in the incidence of CHD between the two groups was independent of lifestyle factors such as smoking and obesity, that are known to increase the chances of heart disease

Conclusions:

- ❑ The Type A behaviour pattern increases vulnerability to heart disease
- ❑ Behaviour modification programmes to reduce Type A behaviour should result in a reduced risk of heart disease

Criticisms:

- ❑ Although some aspects of lifestyle were controlled for, there may have been other variables that could have affected vulnerability to heart disease, such as elements of hardiness
- ❑ This was not an experimental study, so cause and effect cannot be assumed; other studies have failed to show a relationship between Type A behaviour and heart disease e.g. Shekelle et al (1985) – a large scale seven year longitudinal study involving 12,000 men.