

Causes of eating disorders

- The etiology of eating disorders underscores the importance of **equifinality**, there are many pathways to developing an eating disorder

Ex: some women are naturally thin, but their perfectionism drives them to become even thinner.

A. Social factors

- **Standards of beauty** and the premium placed on young women's appearance contribute to causing eating disorders
- However, culture of thinness plays a stronger role in the development of **bulimia** than anorexia.
- However, not everyone living in the same culture develops eating disorders. One other basic influence is the individual's **internalization of the ideal of thinness**. And **same gender peers** can influence internalization and so can **popular media**

Ex: in one study, girls who felt pressure to be thin in the beginning of the study were vulnerable to the media's thin message.

- **Troubled family relationships** may also increase vulnerability to the culture of thinness.
- Young people with **bulimia nervosa** report considerable **conflict** and **rejection** in their families, difficulties that also may contribute to their depression. In contrast, young people with **AN** generally perceive their families as **cohesive** and **nonconflictual**.

Evidence of how culture influences eating disorder

1. The prevalence of eating disorders has risen, as the image of the ideal woman has increasingly emphasized **extreme thinness**.

B. Psychological factors

a. A struggle for perfection and control

- Girls with eating disorders seem **overly conforming** and **eager to please**. Obsessive effort to control eating and weight is a way that these overly compliant good girls control themselves further.

C. Biological factors

- Physiologically, weight is maintained around **weight set point**, fixed weights or small ranges of weight.