Tanner Gibson

Erika McCuiston

Psychology 101

Midterm Paper

23 October 2011

Eating Disorders

I have chosen to do my research on eating disorders. Eating Disorders are characterized by eating too much, too less, purging, bingeing, over-exercising and other symptoms that are related to eating habits and body image (“Eating Disorder” 2011). They are characterized in three different groups; anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge-eating disorder. I will explain the differences of these diseases in this essay and that there is not one single cause for eating disorders.

Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder that the person has a relentless pursuit of being thin, despite the obvious fact that they already are thin. People that have this disease look into a mirror and see themselves, but not how they actually are, they see themselves as this ginormous and fat person when in reality they are skin and bone. Some of the characteristics of an anorexic person are they have an obsessive attitude about eating, they eat very small amounts of a certain kind of food and nothing else, they weigh themselves too often, and also excessively exercise.

People who suffer with anorexia nervosa resist themselves from keeping their weight at or above the minimum weight for their age to height ratio (“Eating Disorder Facts” n.d.). These people also often have unusual eating habits such as; avoiding food and meals, picking out a few foods and only eating them in small amounts, or carefully weighing out and portioning food for their day. The mortality rate for this disease is 5.6% in a decade! This is twelve times higher than the annual death rate due to all causes of death in females aged 15 – 24 (“Eating Disorder Facts” n.d.).

Anorexia nervosa was first discovered during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, dominant interpretations of self-starvation were religious, particularly in Western Christianity. Women who starved themselves were highly esteemed, and the origins of their “holy anorexia” were thought to be supernatural. Catherine of Siena was regarded a saint and the only food she would eat was herbs and then she would use a twig to make herself throw up. Doctors in the early 1900’s were calling this hysteria from the Greek word *hysterikos,* which means of the womb, was mainly associated with women and was thought to be caused by a dysfunction of the uterus (Stacey 2002).

Another eating disorder called bulimia nervosa is when a person is obsessed with being thin or muscular and fit. Most of the time the people with this disease are the normal weight for people in their age group which makes them harder to find because they are very secretive too. Bulimia nervosa is characterized by excessive binging and purging the food by vomiting, laxatives, or exercising excessively.

The signs of a bulimic person include, but not limited to; recurrent episodes of binge eating by eating a lot of food in a short amount of time. This is caused by a lack of self-control during that time of over eating. Some of the side effects from being bulimic is the risk of heart palpations, cardiac arrest, tooth decay, inflamed and sore throat, kidney problems, and dehydration (“Eating Disorder” n.d.).

Bulimia nervosa is traced back to the ancient Romans. Two well-known Roman emperors, Vitellios and Claudius were both bulimic (“A Brief History of Eating Disorders” n.d.). Even with these big guys being bulimic, it was not talked about in the public until the late 1970’s. The first detailed description was given in 1976 by Marlene Boskind-White who, with her husband, worked tirelessly to educate the public on bulimia. The first formal clinical paper that remains the definitive work in the study of bulimia was psychiatrist Gerard Russell’s 1979 article “Bulimia Nervosa: An Ominous Variant of Anorexia Nervosa” (“A Fear of Food” n.d.).

The last type of eating disorders is the binge eating disorder. Binge eaters eat large quantities of food, even after they are already full or not even hungry in the first place. Some of the symptoms of a binge eater are if the person, eats much faster than normal, eat until they are uncomfortably full, eating alone because they are embarrassed by how much they are eating, and they feel disgusted with themselves after they eat that much food.

People that are binge eaters are usually overweight for their height to age ratio. The reason why is that they differ from the other disorders by not doing anything to get rid of all the food they are eating and subsequently become obese. They also experience frequent episodes of out-of-control eating and do nothing to get rid of the calories except sit on the couch. For someone to be considered a binge eater they have to over eat at least twice a week for six months.

The treatments for all of these disorders are about the same I have found out. According to the National Eating Disorder Association, NEDA, the most effective treatment for an eating disorder is some form of psychotherapy or counseling coupled with careful attention to medical and nutritional needs (“Eating Disorder Facts” n.d.). The therapy would be beneficial because it could help them stop their disorder and live a normal life.

In conclusion, eating disorders are a big deal and can cause damage to several people’s lives. If you know someone with an eating disorder point them in the right direction of a counselor to help them get their sickness under control. I hope that you learned a lot about eating disorders, especially that there is not only one factor involved in causing it.

Works Cited

“A Brief History of Eating Disorders.” *Mental-healthmatters.com.* 28 September 2010. Web. 23 October 2011.

“A Fear of Food.” *Randomhistory.com.* 13 December 2008. Web. 21 October 2011.

“Eating Disorders.” *Psychological-disorders.net.* 4 May 2011. Web. 23 October 2011.

“Eating Disorder Facts.” *Newdirectionseatingdisorders.com.* Web. 21 October 2011.

Von Ranson, Kristin M., and Laurel M. Wallace. "Treatment manuals: Use in the treatment of bulimia nervosa." *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 49.11 (2011): 815+. *Health Reference Center Academic*. Web. 23 October 2011.

Stacey, Michelle. 2002. The Fasting Girl: A True Victorian Medical Mystery. New York, NY: Penguin Putnam, Inc. 21 October 2011.