CHAPTER 10: EATING DISORDERS
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- To what extent is exposure to Westernised body-shape ideals a *necessary* factor in developing anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa? Can this question be answered by examining cultural differences in the prevalence of eating disorders?

- Defining the risk factors involved in eating disorders provides us with a good idea of *what* factors are involved, but not *how* they are involved. What kinds of studies are required to determine whether a risk factor has a *causal* influence on the development of an eating disorder?

- Eating disorders are accompanied by changes in hormonal balance, levels of endogenous opioids and brain neurotransmitters. But to what extent are these *causes* of eating disorders as opposed to *effects* of the disorder?

- We know that exposure to media images of ideal body shapes influences attitudes to eating and body shape, but how is this converted into the development of an eating disorder?

- Body dissatisfaction and dieting are central features of a number of models of eating disorders, but why is it that some people who diet and have high body dissatisfaction develop an eating disorder and others do not?

- A dysfunctional family environment is often associated with adolescent eating disorders, but how does that dysfunctional environment help to develop and maintain such disorders?

- Adverse life experiences are a risk factor for eating disorders, but is their role to generate other forms of psychopathology (e.g. depression) that facilitate the development of an eating disorder?

- Negative affect is often viewed as an *outcome* of having a particular psychopathology, but does negative affect have a *causal* effect on the development of eating disorders?

- Perfectionism is a prominent feature of individuals with eating disorders, but it is also a significant feature of many other psychopathologies. So what makes someone with perfectionist characteristics develop an eating disorder rather than some other psychopathology (such as OCD or GAD)?