

## EDITOR'S NOTE

*Beginning with 2006, one of the two annual issues of the journal Psychological Topics is thematic. This is the third special issue and it is dedicated to the problem of eating disorders and obesity. The relationship of eating and weight regulation to emotional and physical well being has fascinated scientific thinking for centuries. In almost every culture and religion, attitudes and customs to the emaciated or the obese are visible, as are rituals regarding foods, many of which have been thought to have specific relationships to cognitive, affective, or behavioural functions. Interest in these subjects has peaked in the last 30 years as obesity and the eating disorders, anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa, have assumed an increased importance in the clinical field. Serious forms of the eating disorders affect 3% of the female population, and more mild variants are probably five times as common.*

*This issue presents a broad range of research reports and theoretical contributions. The first few articles are related to risk factors in the development of eating disorders, especially anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa, followed by articles related to binge eating disorders, and finally there are some papers related to treatment of eating disorders, obesity, and binge eating.*

*The first paper is related to female body dissatisfaction and perceptions of the attractive female body in different cultures such as African, east European, and American. Compared to the other cultures, in the U.S., slender bodies were more highly valued and women reported a larger discrepancy between their current and ideal bodies. The researches on body dissatisfaction are very important because it represents a factor of high risk for the development of an eating disorder.*

*The second study examined the role of internalization and comparison as mediators of relationships between socio-cultural pressures to be thin, psychological factors, restrictive and bulimic behaviours in college females. Internalization is a significant mediator of the relationships between socio-cultural pressures to be thin, psychological factors and disturbed eating habits (restrictive and bulimic behaviour). Social comparison is relevant as a mediator between social influence, negative affect, self-esteem, perfectionism, and restrictive behaviour but does not mediate bulimic behaviour.*

*The third article reviews several most important evolutionary mechanisms that underlie eating disorders. The first part clarifies evolutionary foundations of mental disorders and various mechanisms leading to their development. In the second part, selective pressures and evolved adaptations causing contemporary epidemic of obesity as well as differences in dietary regimes and life-style between modern humans and their ancestors are described.*

*The fourth and fifth papers are related to binge eating. Guerrieri et al. in their research indicate that impulsivity plays a role in the problem of overeating and they analysed populations that typically overeat (the obese and Bulimia Nervosa patients), populations that are typically impulsive (e.g. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder patients) and healthy participants. Cuzzolaro et al. review the main points of the literature that has developed on diagnosis and treatment of binge eating disorder and present the results of an original research on body image in obese patients with binge eating.*

*In second part of this special issue of the journal there are five articles related to therapy of eating disorders especially cognitive-behavioural therapy. The first of these papers describe a novel model of intensive outpatient cognitive-behaviour therapy indicated for eating disorder patients who are having difficulty modifying their eating habits in response to conventional outpatient therapy.*

*The second paper reports a case of late onset anorexia nervosa treated with pharmacological therapy. After the prescription of olanzapine, the patient was more cooperative and able to maintain a stable acceptable weight.*

*The third is a retrospective study, which explore the mirror behaviour of anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and non-clinical female subjects and investigate whether mirror avoidance or checking are related to negative body experiences. Bulimic patients observed their body more often in the mirror than anorexic patients and the control subjects do. Anorexic patients and control subjects with a mirror checking behaviour had a more negative body experience than those with mirror avoidance behaviour.*

*The fourth study explores a psychological profile and quality of life of morbid obese patients attending a cognitive behavioural program. The last paper describes a six months program with the objective of normalization of eating habits and stopping the binge eating episodes, promoting physical activity and a positive body experience and learning specific skills such as assertivity, identify, tolerate and express negative emotions, promoting self-esteem and prevention of relapse.*

*These studies will contribute to a better understanding of development of eating disorders, diagnostic and treatment, with particularly reference on cognitive behavioural treatment of obesity and binge eating disorder.*

*I would like to express our thanks to all the authors for their contribution in this special issue of Psychological Topics dedicated to eating disorders and obesity.*

*Alessandra Pokrajac-Bulian*