

- *5 Becker et al. (2002) conducted a natural experiment in Fiji to investigate the impact of television on eating behaviours. They assessed attitudes to eating in 1995, just as television was being introduced to the native population. They returned in 1998 to assess eating behaviours after three years of television exposure.

63 girls with a mean age of 17.3 years took part in 1995. A second sample of 65 girls with a mean age of 16.9 years took part in 1998.

To score eating behaviours, the two samples of girls completed a standardised EAT-26 questionnaire. They also answered questions about television viewing. Their weight, height, and body mass index (BMI) were also recorded.

Comparisons between 1995 and 1998 data indicated that, after exposure to western imagery on television, the reports of disordered eating such as self-induced vomiting to lose weight had increased.

Evaluate the use of natural experiments to investigate human behaviour.

- Plan:
- * Extraneous variables cannot be controlled \rightarrow cause and effect cannot be established \downarrow validity
 - * environment is real and naturalistic \rightarrow no demand characteristics
 - * findings differ at times - cannot be replicated \downarrow reliability.
- (12)

A natural experiment is an experiment where the researcher is not directly manipulating the independent variable but is observing it happen naturally. A naturalistic experiment takes place in a real life setting not a laboratory. Extraneous variables are very hard to eliminate and a naturalistic experiment has low levels of control.

Becker has no control over the environment in Fiji, he cannot eliminate extraneous variables such as attitudes.



towards food of the participant.

A02: This means that Becker is not controlling any variable to do with eating behavior, he is just observing the impact of television behavior on eating behaviors. Becker is not able to control the television channels in Fiji, they have evolved over time and the environment in Fiji is real and naturalistic. Becker is not conducting the study in a lab, he is recording attitudes from a real life setting.

A03: A natural experiment is beneficial because the environment of Fiji is real and naturalistic, it is not manipulated or being tampered with. This means that the sample of girls will behave naturally and will not display demand characteristics. This is because natural and normal behavior of attitudes towards eating is displayed. They can answer the questionnaire with more honesty and less bias as they know they are not in a controlled/artificial setting. This means that they will behave naturally, which will increase the validity for Becker's study because



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the participants are acting naturally and not in a fake way.

A weakness of naturalistic environment experiments is that cause and effect cannot be established as extraneous variables cannot be controlled. As Fifi's television programmes are a real life setting, Becker cannot control what the girls are watching. This means that there might be other factors which affect eating behaviour but Becker cannot find the true effect because he is not controlling the television programmes. This means that cause and effect cannot be established which means Becker cannot fully understand the cause of television on eating behaviour because there might be other factors in television programmes he cannot control. This limits his findings.

Another weakness of using a natural experiment is that it cannot be replicated, reducing its reliability. The reliability of an outcome is the consistency of an outcome which means it is spontaneous. This means that



if another psychologist was to replicate Becker's experiment they would have different findings because the environment is natural and spontaneous. This decreases the reliability of Becker's experiment on seeing the effect of television on eating behaviour because

(Total for Question 5 = 12 marks)

if he was to conduct the same experiment in Fiji, 5 years later he would have different findings. If Becker would conduct this experiment in another country this he would have different findings because countries and cultures differ. A naturalistic environment would lower reliability because there would be different findings each time this experiment is conducted.

TOTAL FOR SECTION A = 37 MARKS



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