Intuitive Eating: Perspectives from college students

Under the direction of Jennifer D. McMillen & Andrea McPherson

Jessica Long, MS
Caroline Coleman & Emily Watkins

Meredith College
SNEB 2020
By the end of the session you should be able to...

- explain to a friend 3 aspects of intuitive eating.
- identify patterns in intuitive eating and visceral sensitivity scores.
- discuss with a colleague ideas you have about encouraging intuitive eating at your institution.

Objectives!
First we'll discuss IE generally then we'll look at our project and sample deliverables
A little bit about Intuitive Eating
We will not talk about eat this...not that!
What do you know?

➔ When was the Intuitive Eating concept created?

➔ How many study abstracts populate if you search Intuitive Eating in PubMed?

➔ What theory did the creators utilize?
What do you know?

➔ When was the Intuitive Eating concept created?
   1995

➔ How many study abstracts populate if you search Intuitive Eating in PubMed?
   240

➔ What theory did the creators utilize?
   Idea of ideal weight maintained by responding to hunger and satiety cues.
Study Methods
What was our purpose?

To gain insight into the eating habits of college students.

Focus was given to understanding motivations and barriers for using components of intuitive eating!
Quantitative Hypothesis:
Higher score on IES-2 would have lower score on VSI

Qualitative Research Questions:
How do students use bodily cues to inform food choices?
What other factors influence food choice and IE practices?

Other Questions
Are there differences based on institution characteristics?
Private/Public?
Small/Large?
Outline of Methods

**Recruiting/Participants**
- Email recruiting
- 2 college/university
- Age 18-25
- 283 total participants

**Survey**
- Qualtrics online survey
- Consent
- Demographics
- IES-2 and VSI

**Focus Groups**
- Qualtrics invite
- 1 on each campus
- ~45 minutes
- Moderator guide was semi-structured
Participants

283 Undergraduate students (18-25)
168 from large state university
115 from small private college

Gender
Male: 57
Female: 225
Prefer not to disclose: 1
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IES-2 Assessment

23 item scale (Tykla, 2013)
Likert style (5 point)
Has 4 subscales

**Designed to assess the degree/intensity of intuitive eating**

**Critical Thinking:**

Why subscales?

To give a holistic and detailed measure! There are several components of intuitive eating
IES-2 Subscores

**UPE**
- Unconditional Permission to Eat
- 6 questions

**EPR**
- Eating for Physical Rather than Emotional Reasons
- 8 questions

**RHSC**
- Reliance on Hunger and Satiety Cues
- 6 questions

**B-FCC**
- Body-Food Choice Congruence
- 3 questions
### IES-2 Example Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I try to avoid certain foods high in fat, carbohydrates or calories</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5 Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have forbidden foods that I don’t allow myself to eat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>3. I get mad at myself for eating something unhealthy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>4. If I am craving a certain food, I allow myself to have it</td>
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Visceral Sensitivity Assessment (VSI)

15 item scale (Labus, 2004)

Likert style (6 point)

Unidimensional

Designed to assess the degree/intensity of gastrointestinal specific anxiety

Possible Score 0-90

Critical Thinking:

What does gastrointestinal specific anxiety mean?

Cognitive-behavioral responses to the perceived fear of gastrointestinal response!
### VSI Example Questions

1. I worry that whenever I eat during the day bloating and distension in my belly will get worse
   - 1: Strongly Disagree
   - 2: Disagree
   - 3: Somewhat Disagree
   - 4: Somewhat Agree
   - 5: Agree
   - 6: Strongly Agree

2. I get anxious when I go to a new restaurant
   - 1: Strongly Disagree
   - 2: Disagree
   - 3: Somewhat Disagree
   - 4: Somewhat Agree
   - 5: Agree
   - 6: Strongly Agree

3. I often worry about problems in my belly
   - 1: Strongly Disagree
   - 2: Disagree
   - 3: Somewhat Disagree
   - 4: Somewhat Agree
   - 5: Agree
   - 6: Strongly Agree

4. I have a difficult time enjoying myself because I cannot get my mind off of discomfort in my belly
   - 1: Strongly Disagree
   - 2: Disagree
   - 3: Somewhat Disagree
   - 4: Somewhat Agree
   - 5: Agree
   - 6: Strongly Agree
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Extensive Qualitative Training & Moderator Guide Development

Qualitative Research Basic Training
Literature Review and Quantitative Data Informed Moderator Guide Development
Summarization technique training for listening skills and interpersonal communication
Multiple Mock interviews
Mock focus group

Weekly meetings for feedback and moderator guide adjustments

Verbatim transcripts from video records to word documents for text analysis
Thematic analysis by 100% group consensus
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Follow-up Probes</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. How do you recognize when you are hungry?</td>
<td>How does your body let you know when to eat? What words do you use to describe hunger?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. How do you recognize when you are full?</td>
<td>How does your body let you know when to stop eating? How do you feel when you satisfy your hunger?</td>
</tr>
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<td>3. How do you use your hunger cues to help you decide what foods to eat?</td>
<td>Tell me about the foods you are most likely to eat when you are hungry. When do you find it difficult to recognize that you’re hungry?</td>
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<td>4. How do you use your fullness cues to help you decide when to stop eating?</td>
<td>What foods are you more likely to eat when you are full? When do you find it difficult to listen to your body’s fullness cues?</td>
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Study Results
Survey Results

Participant Demographics

Gender

IES-2 and VSI correlation
## Participant Demographics

<table>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>IES-2 Score (N = 283)</th>
<th>VSI Score (N = 279)</th>
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<td>Gender, n (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>57 (20.14)</td>
<td>P = 0.002</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>225 (79.51)</td>
<td>P = 0.008</td>
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<td>Prefer not to disclose</td>
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Participant Demographics

Question: Do you think males or females tended to score higher on IES? What about VSI?

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Males tended to score higher than females on the IES.

Females tended to score higher than males on the VSI.


IES & VSI

Is this surprising to you?
Or what you expected?
Not entirely unexpected...


Focus Group Results

2 Focus Groups
10 total participants
3 dominant emergent themes
8 sub-themes

Dominant Emergent Themes

Data collection is ongoing.
Focus groups will continue until saturation is reached.
External Societal Influences

Scheduling/routines/convenience

Cost vs. waste

Perceptions of healthy and unhealthy...opportunities for nutrition education

Our tomato plant needs Sunshine

Sunshine represents supportive external societal influences
Participant Quote:

“I definitely prioritize my work over going to eat”
Participant Quote:

“[When] we go out to eat... I feel I have to eat everything in front of me or I'm being wasteful.”
Participant Quote:

“If I’m feeling really bad...when I ate too unhealthily...I’ll limit myself despite how hungry I am.”
External Interpersonal Influences

Social comfort/discomfort when eating with others

Reaction to feeling hungry

Dependence on others/autonomy

Our tomato plant needs Oxygen (air)

Oxygen (air) represents supportive external interpersonal influences
Participant Quote:

“Social situations where everyone has gotten 1 or 2 plates... I’ll go grab another... but if I’m the only one eating, maybe I should stop.”
Participant Quote:

“...if you are around a bunch of other people and they aren’t hungry it feels awkward to be hungry.”
Participant Quote:

“I live at home so whatever my mom cooks [is what I eat]”
Internal Influences

Physiological awareness/lack of physiological awareness (taste override)

Emotional eating

Our tomato plant needs strong roots to get water & nutrients

Roots represent supportive internal influences
Participant Quote:

“I’m always up for dessert, even if I’m full.”
Participant Quote:

“I have a big problem with emotion eating. If I’m sad, I just want some French fries or [fast food].”
When we have supportive external and internal influences the tomato can develop and ripen. The tomatoes are the Intuitive Eating practices. At any given time, some are further along (more mature) than others.
Barriers to Intuitive Eating in College Students: A Qualitative Model

Societal
- Cost vs. Waste
- Scheduling conflicts
- Nutrition education

Interpersonal
- Reliance on others
- Discomfort eating around others

Intrapersonal
- Ignoring fullness cues
- Emotional eating
Pulling it all together to impact our community
What do students see?

**Why reporting sexual assault is a complex and personal decision**
If you or a friend have experienced sexual assault or harassment, it's important to know that there isn’t one “right” way to proceed. Here are some of the resources that are available to survivors.
Posted on June 24, 2020

**Ask the nutritionist: “I am healthy but on the skinny side. How do I gain weight?”**
If you have a low body weight and wish to gain weight for health or sports-related reasons, here’s how to do it.
Posted on June 24, 2020

**Our 4 favorite stress-busting yoga routines**
These four yoga routines are perfect for undoing the stresses of college life.
Posted on June 24, 2020

**FitnessU: Chest and back exercises for posture, balance, and strength**
Add these chest and back exercises to your workout to avoid rounded shoulders, improve your posture, and create upper body balance.
Posted on June 17, 2020

**How healthy is your relationship? Take the quiz**
Is your partner’s behavior normal or a big red flag that they might be controlling or abusive? Take our quiz to see if you’re in a healthy relationship.
Posted on June 17, 2020

**June is Men’s Health Month: Here are 4 tips to feel your best**
This is a PSA to all men to go get your annual check-up (plus three other healthy habits you should build to stay feeling good).
Posted on June 17, 2020

**RELATED ARTICLES**

- FitnessU: Chest and back exercises for posture, balance, and strength
- The power of body positivity, and why weight stigma matters

It is hard to find time to cook healthy meals as college students. So, here's some great and quick healthy recipes! #TastyTuesday

Recipes found here: soo.nf/in8q
What do students see?

The Center for Student Well-Being is housed within the Department of Recreation and Wellness and strives to provide education and develop students’ knowledge as it relates to their health and well-being. We believe that a student’s success on campus is directly correlated with their understanding of their personal wellness journey. Focus areas include, but are not limited to, alcohol and substance use prevention, sexual health, nutrition and body image, mental health, and violence prevention. The Center for Student Well-Being, in collaboration with the Gender Diversity Working Group, is committed to affirming the lives of and promoting social justice for Trans* and Non-Binary people. We have created a comprehensive toolkit to support gender diverse students, located here: https://bit.ly/2Z0EaAc. Visit our calendar here: Center for Student Well-Being.

The Center for Student Well-Being Online is a Canvas-based resource where you can learn self-care. Topics include mental health, physical activity, rest, mental health, etc. Direct links to register for events and follow us on Instagram. Simply self-select and select any topic that interests you.
What do students see?

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Intuitive Eating Workshop — Coming Spring 2020

Intuitive Eating is a way to nourish your body to support physical and mental health. It includes honoring your hunger and fullness, eating mindfully, and making peace with food. It rejects the false promises of dieting. Dates, times, and registration details forthcoming.

Body Project

The Body Project is an interactive program found to improve body image and reduce eating problems in women. This peer-led workshop is offered in 4 sessions (60 minutes each). For more information, visit our Body Project webpage.

Wellness Not Weight

Wellness Not Weight is a health-focused, justice-oriented campaign to raise awareness of the mental, emotional, and physical dangers of weighing. Fitness, well-being, and self-worth cannot be measured by the scale. To learn more, visit our Wellness Not Weight webpage.
Deliverable examples based on student identified barriers!
INTUITIVE EATING
Barriers to look out for

External Societal Influences

SCHEDULES AND ROUTINES
Take a few minutes and plan for your day.
Bring along a nourishing snack.
Include meal times in your schedule.

COST AND WASTE
Rather than trying to "get your monies worth",
consider asking for a to go box.
It feels great to enjoy delicious leftovers.

HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY
Practice letting go of strict labels for foods.
Empower yourself to eat nourishing foods in
moderation, focus on balance and variety.

For more info, visit

Infographic Example
Poster for Dining Hall:
Intuitive Eating Hunger-Fullness Scale

HUNGER-FULLNESS SCALE

1. Ravenous
   "I'm so hungry I feel like I might faint."

2. Very hungry
   "Did you hear that? My stomach is gurgling loudly, and it hurts."

3. Hungry
   "My body is telling me it's ready for nourishment."

4. Slightly hungry
   "I could eat something."

5. Neutral
   "I'm not hungry or full."

6. Slightly full
   "My stomach is getting full, but I want a few more bites."

7. Satisfied
   "If I take a few more bites, my stomach will hurt."

8. Full
   "I might need to unbuckle my jeans."

9. Very full
   "I feel bloated and uncomfortable."

10. Overstuffed
    "I think I'm going to get sick."

Jessica Long, MS
@jessicalongrd
Campus Activity
Snack/Lunch with a Professor
"Sometimes when I’m hungry, I feel that it’s wrong and that I shouldn’t be hungry."

"I can trust my body to tell me when it's hungry. When it does, I should honor my body's needs."
“I have a set schedule around when I eat; not really my stomach, but my head.”

"I don't usually eat at this time, but my stomach is rumbling, so I'm going to have a snack."
Twitter Message Examples

“Always keep snacks on hand. Be prepared for your hunger cues!”

“Listen to YOUR body & YOUR hunger cues. We all have different needs. Each of our plates should look unique!”
What makes these deliverables helpful?

They exist!

Encourage Intuitive Eating Practices

They have a single digestible idea

Respond to identified challenges

Utilize our participant ideas

Can be combined for coordinated campaign

We tried to use explicit Language

And have appealing visuals

And together provide a memorable message
Let's brainstorm together...

Take a few minutes and think about how you can use IE positive language and messaging in your work?

Tips:
- What info do they need to know?
- What language can you use?
- What services would help?
Other ideas...

Free speech boards
Flyers
Dining Hall Offerings/Hours
Quick Meal/snack Tips
Podcast by students
IE concept reminder app/texts/etc.
Thank you for your time!

Questions?