

Interoceptive Awareness and Emotional Eating: The Role of Appetite and Emotional Awareness

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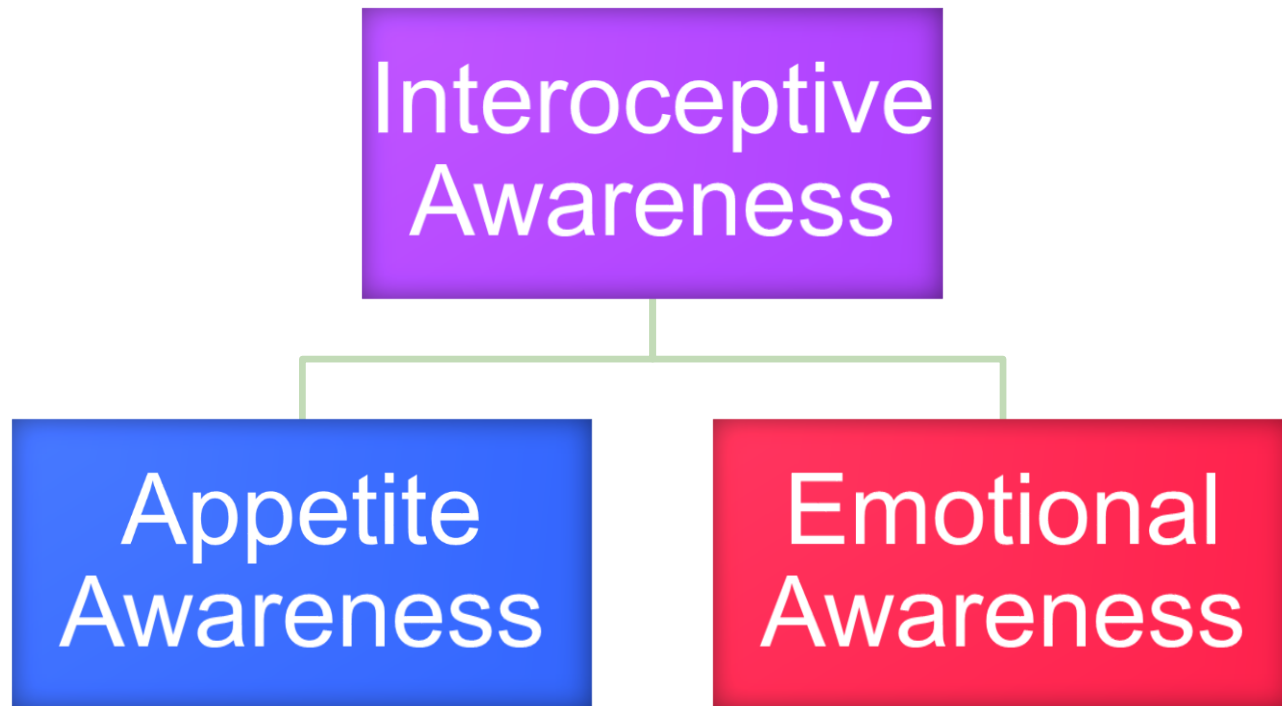
Emotional Eating

- Eating in response to an emotion rather than a physiological need (Moon & Berenbaum, 2009)
 - Results in an increase in unnecessary food intake (Macht, 2008)
- More common in women (Rommel et al., 2012)
- Can lead to an unhealthy weight, lower self-esteem, and depression (Brown et al., 2010)
 - Can contribute to development of eating disorders (Ouwens et al., 2009)

Interoceptive Awareness

- Sensitivity to stimuli originating from within the body
 - Ability to perceive and identify internal signals (Brown et al., 2010; Herbert & Pollatos, 2012)
- Difficulty perceiving internal bodily signals is a risk factor for the development of eating disorders (Fassino et al., 2004)

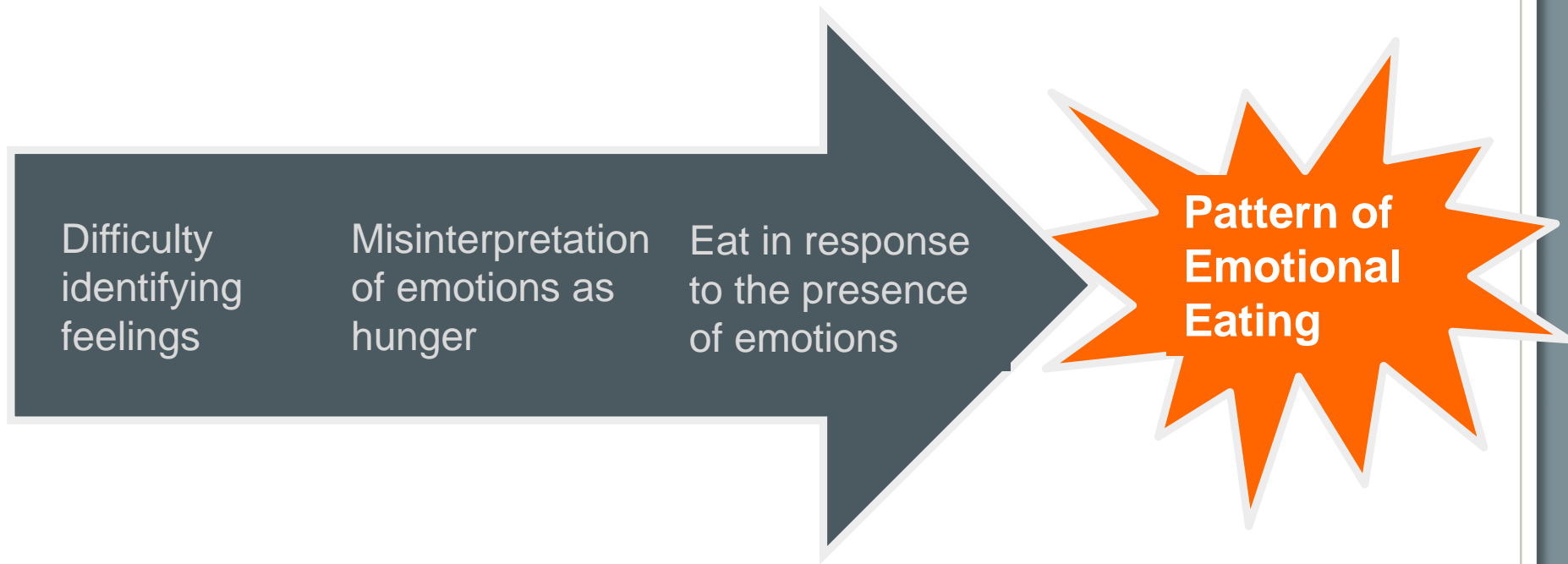
Interoceptive Awareness: Appetite Awareness and Emotional Awareness



Appetite Awareness

- Appetite Awareness Training (AAT; Craighead & Allen, 1995)
 - Purpose is to improve ability to respond to internal cues for eating and therefore reduce overeating
 - Effectively reduces overeating and binge eating (Hill et al., 2011)
 - Deficits in appetite awareness are associated with binge eating

Emotional Awareness

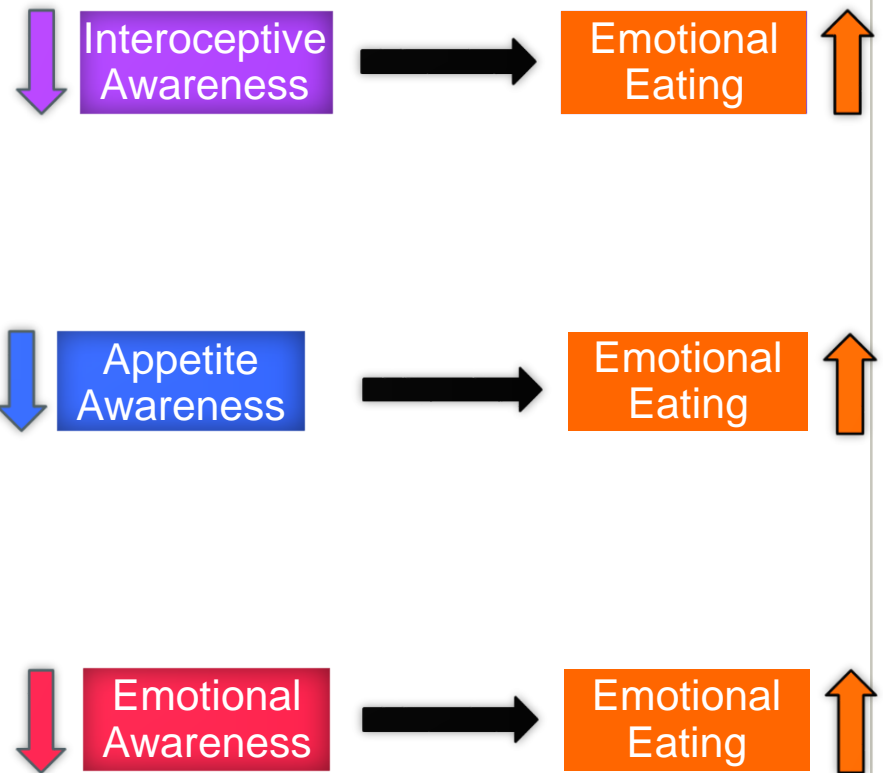


Appetite and Emotional Awareness

- Separate constructs that have unique effects on disordered eating
 - Research on interventions for BED and BN specifically target appetite and emotional awareness, which results in symptom reduction (Brown et al., 2010; Hill et al., 2011)
- Each construct may serve different roles and have different implications for treatment
- **Important to better understand these constructs in relation to emotional eating**

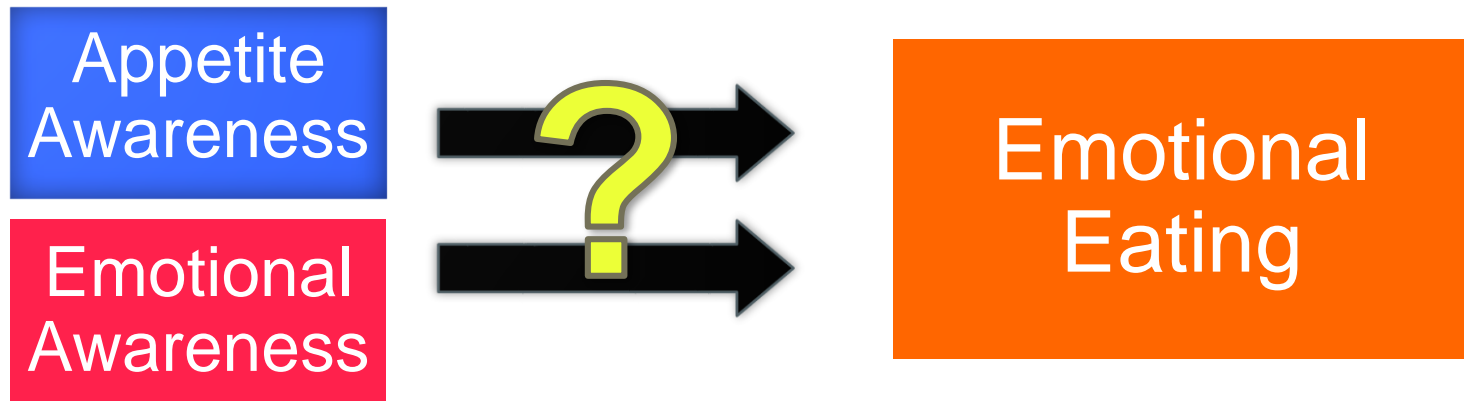
Study Purpose: Aims 1 & 2

- **Aim 1:** To replicate the relationship between interoceptive awareness and emotional eating (e.g., Ouwens et al., 2009)
- **Aim 2a:** To examine the relationship between appetite awareness and emotional eating
- **Aim 2b:** To replicate the relationship between emotional awareness and emotional eating (e.g., Moon & Berenbaum, 2009)



Study Purpose: Aim 3

- **Aim 3:** To explore whether appetite or emotional awareness is a stronger predictor of emotional eating by examining these as concomitant predictors



Procedure

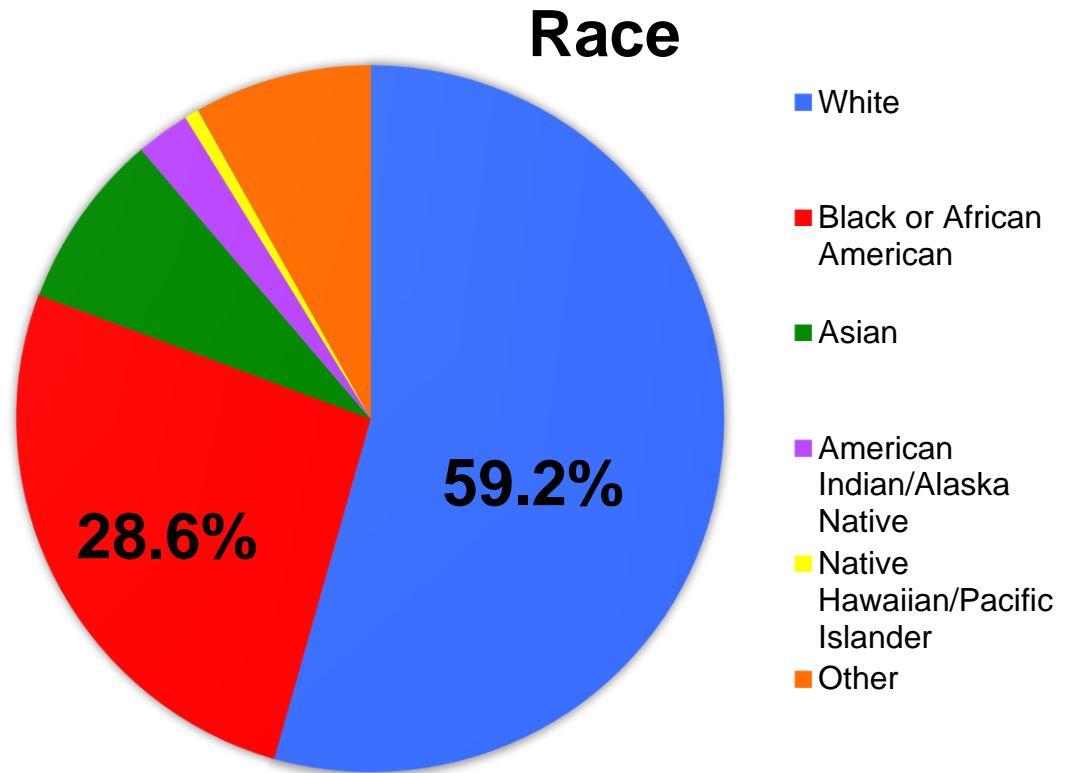
- Participants recruited from undergraduate classes
 - Eligible for extra credit
- Measures completed online through PsychData

Measures

Interoceptive Awareness Questionnaire-Expanded (IAQ-E) (Trenary et al., 2005) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total Score	Interoceptive Awareness
Interoceptive Awareness Questionnaire-Expanded (IAQ-E) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appetite Awareness Subscale	Appetite Awareness
Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20 (TAS-20) (Bagby et al., 1994) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty Identifying Feelings Subscale	Emotional Awareness
Emotional Eating Scale (EES) (Arnow et al., 1995) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total Score	Emotional Eating

Participants

- N = 147 female undergraduate students
- Age = 19.74 years
- BMI = 25.38 kg/m²



Results: Aims 1 & 2

Summary of Separate Simple Regression Analyses with Interoceptive, Appetite, and Emotional Awareness Predicting Emotional Eating (N=147)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Regression 1					
Interoceptive Awareness	1.01	0.13	.54**	59.90**	.000
Regression 2					
Appetite Awareness	1.74	0.23	.53**	55.72**	.000
Regression 3					
Emotional Awareness	1.44	0.28	.39**	25.95**	.000

Note. $R^2 = .29$ for Regression 1; $R^2 = .28$ for Regression 2; $R^2 = .15$ for Regression 3.



Results: Aim 3

Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis with Appetite and Emotional Awareness Predicting Emotional Eating (N=147)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Step 1					
Constant	-7.34	4.94		-1.49	.139
Appetite Awareness	1.45	0.26	.44	5.67	.000
Emotional Awareness	0.70	0.29	.19	2.46	.015

Note. $R^2 = .31$; $F = 31.84$.



Discussion

- Women with lower levels of interoceptive awareness report higher levels of emotional eating
- Decreased awareness of hunger and satiety cues, as well as emotions, may play an important role in emotional eating (Craighead & Allen, 1995; Moon & Berenbaum, 2009)

Discussion

- While appetite awareness and emotional awareness were unique predictors of emotional eating, the effect of appetite awareness was stronger
- Inability to identify emotions may have less of an impact than deficits in recognizing the most basic internal physiological sensations that direct eating
- Treatments such as AAT (Craighead & Allen, 1995) warrant further exploration with emotional eating

Limitations and Future Directions

- Limitations
 - Cross-sectional design
 - Female college students
- Future Directions
 - Potential bi-directional associations
 - Explore optimal combination of appetite and emotional awareness in treating emotional eating
 - Clinical samples and men
 - Interoceptive exposure (Boswell et al., 2015)

Conclusion

- Expanded understanding of relationship between interoceptive awareness and emotional eating
- Appetite and emotional awareness are each separate, important aspects of interoceptive awareness in relation to emotional eating
- Target the improvement of both appetite and emotional awareness, with particular emphasis on appetite awareness, in treating emotional eating

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Thank You!