



Emotional Eating in Obesity: Who Experiences the Benefits of Treatment?

Alexandra D. Convertino, B.S., Evan M. Forman, Ph.D., and Meghan L. Butryn, Ph.D.

Drexel University, WELL Center

Introduction

- Emotional eating (EE) is the tendency to overeat in response to negative emotions.
- Estimated to affect 60% of overweight and obese adults.
- EE has been linked to poorer outcomes in behavioral weight loss (BWL) treatment.
- There is notable variability in the extent to which emotional eating improves during BWL.
- Greater improvements are correlated with increased weight loss.
- Typically, participants who are white, older, and male are more successful in treatment; change in EE might be one explanation for these trends.

Aims

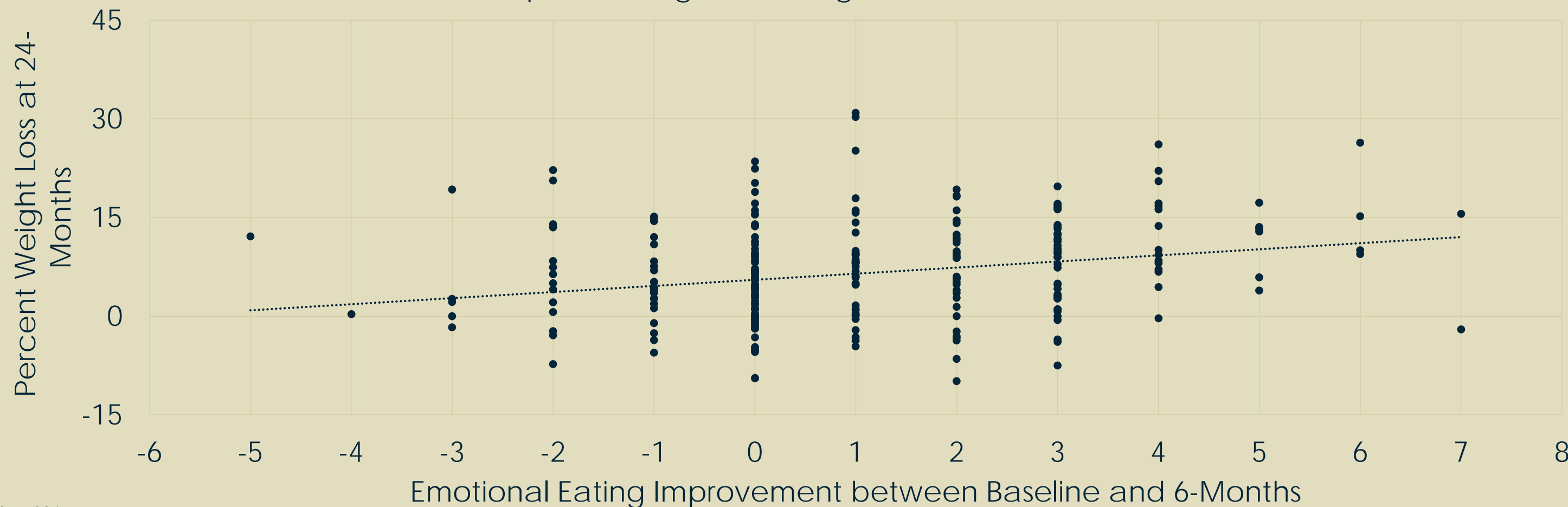
1. Investigate EE as a predictor of weight loss outcome
2. Explore race, gender, and age for baseline differences in EE, as well as change over time.

Methods

- Participants were 283 overweight and obese adults enrolled in a 12-month BWL program.
- Emotional eating change was measured by the Three-Factor Eating Questionnaire.
- The mean age of this sample was 53.22 years old.
- 79% of the sample were female.
- Most participants identified as white (66%) or African American (29%).

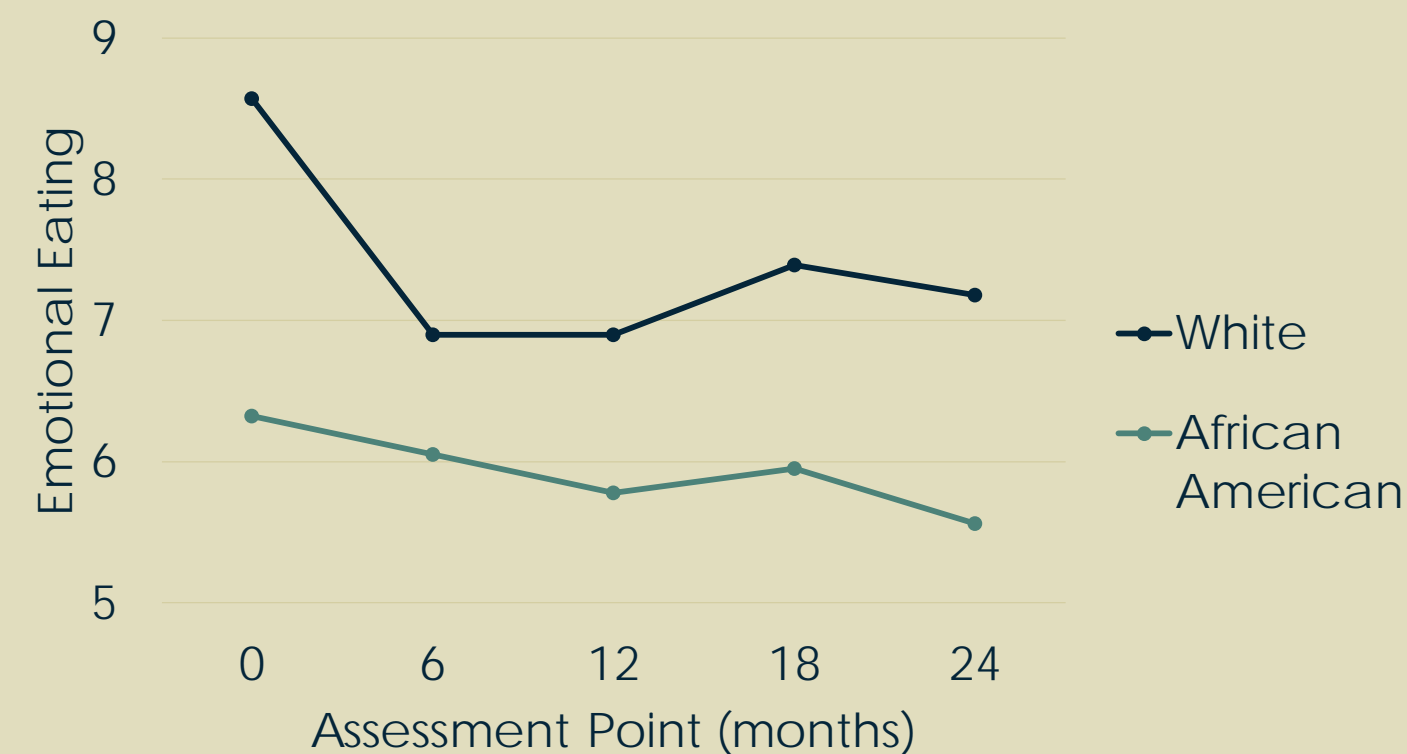
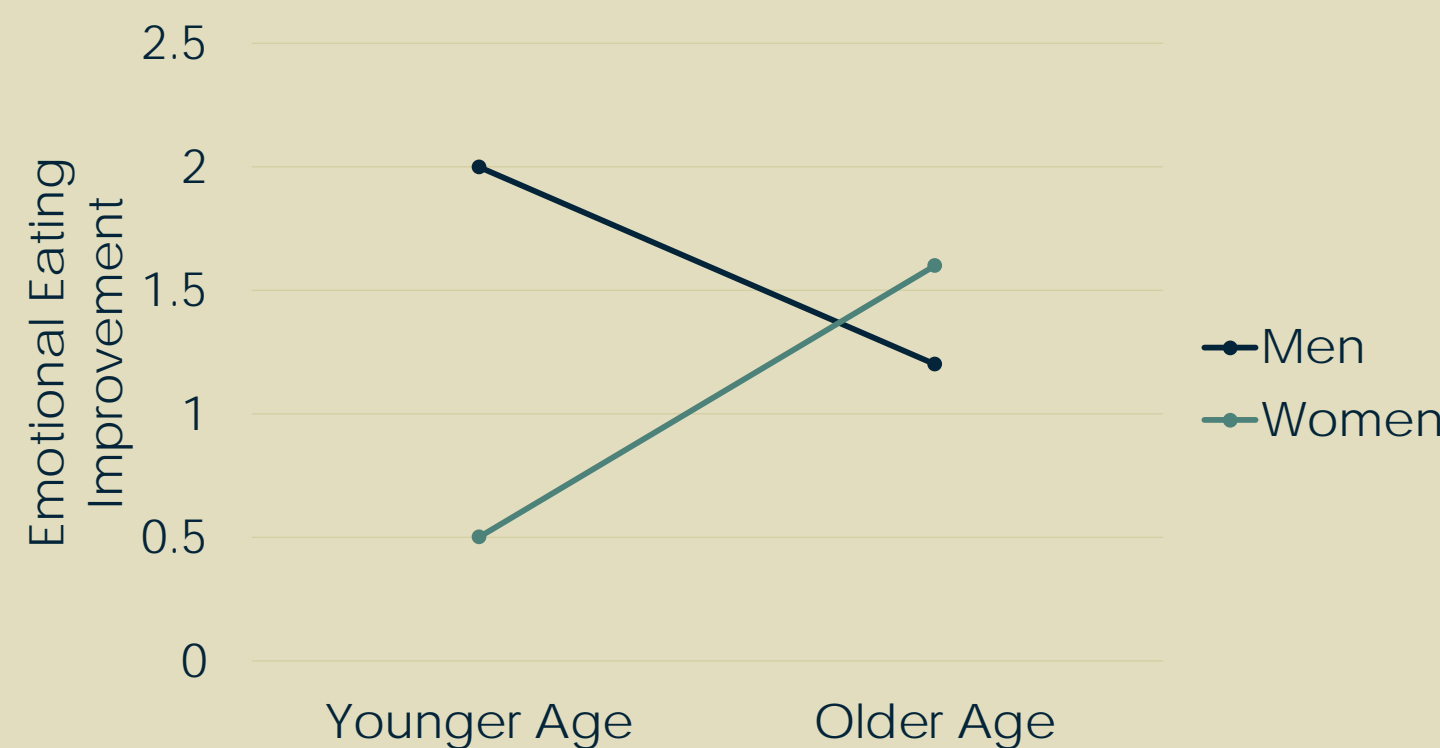
Aim 1 Results

- Baseline EE score did not predict weight loss outcomes at any time point, but decreased emotional eating between baseline and six months predicted greater weight losses at 6-, 12-, 18-, and 24-months.



Aim 2 Results

- There were no baseline differences in EE for gender or age. There was an interaction ($p=.004$), such that young men experienced greater improvement in EE than young women, but this effect disappeared with age.
- There was a significant effect for race, such that African American participants started with lower EE than white participants ($p=.001$), but this difference disappeared at 6-months.



Discussion

- Emotional eating change is a significant factor that influences weight loss outcomes long after treatment ends.
- Emotional eating in young women and African American participants may not be adequately targeted in behavioral weight loss.
- Future studies should develop interventions that specifically target emotional eating in these populations.