

New Study Seeks Solutions for Binge Eating

BY JULIE TWELLMAN
STAFF WRITER

Delicious. Succulent. Juicy. Tasty. All positive adjectives for that life sustainer, food. But yummy though it is, there are many people who have problems with eating. Some people start eating and just can't stop, while others binge and then purge. Many even keep themselves from eating in an effort to lose weight.

Heather Allen, a graduate student from Durham who is currently researching binge-eating disorders for the clinical psychology department, said many eating disorders often start at a young age, when a person is beginning high school or starting college.

"These days, young women especially are getting messages from the media and advertisements telling them to be thinner than is biologically realistic," Allen said. "The ideal right now is, regrettably, Kate Moss, and it's really not a good idea for other girls to think that they can or should have her figure."

Statistically, more women than men have problems with eating disorders.

Ninety-five percent of persons diagnosed with anorexia nervosa, a disorder where victims deny themselves food in order to lose weight, are women.

Higher percentages of women are also diagnosed with anorexia bulimia, a disorder which involves bingeing on large amounts of food and then purging by vomiting or using laxatives.

Binge eating is a newly recognized eating disorder which has a higher percentage of male sufferers than the other recognized disorders. The difference between binge-eating disorder and anorexia bulimia is that bulimic persons purge after overeating and binge eaters do not.

According to Allen, binge eaters usually follow one of two paths. The first involves women and men who have problems with bingeing and gain weight over a period of years, only to end up at weight-treatment centers later in life. The second group of people tend to eventually turn into bulimics.

Allen also said there are many reasons why so many people fall into problems with food. People want to look good, so

they diet. Then they feel like they have been punishing themselves, so they splurge on a craved food.

Often a person's poor self-esteem or negative feelings lead to overeating, Allen said. She added that the loss of self-control associated with binge eating usually leads to even lower self-esteem.

"When encountering stressful situations, many people tend to take out their frustrations on their bodies," Allen said. "Most usually follow their cravings and go after the sweets, like chocolate cake and brownies; but even if these people were eating fresh fruits and salads, the quantity of food they consume when they binge still wouldn't be healthy."

Allen said most people learn from birth to eat at mealtimes and not in between, and they tend to respond better to the clock than to their own bodily clues. This habit can be detrimental if people force themselves to eat when they're not hungry.

Her study will focus on retraining people in lifestyle problem-solving, as well as how to get back in touch with the physiological cues of hunger and fullness. According to

Allen, losing touch with these signals is common among people who diet often.

In addition to Allen's therapy group, the Wellness Resource Center will also be continuing its confidential peer support group for persons with anorexia nervosa and related disorders this year.

Donna Woody, the secretary for the Wellness Resource Center, said the group takes a health-centered angle in trying to solve the problem.

"We try to see it from the nutritional point of view and help people consider their health in an effort to eat better," Woody said. "We do not take the psychological standpoint."

This is the sixth year for the Wellness Resource Center's support group. Woody said its best feature is that "it is always facilitated by an experienced member of the group who is also recovering from an eating disorder."

Anyone interested in the support group or participating in Allen's study is encouraged to get in touch with the Wellness Resource Center or the clinical psychology department.

RUSH

FROM PAGE 3

done well.

"A little over 90 percent who join sororities are still with the same sororities one year later," he said. He thinks rush has a lot to do with that. "Some people decide it's for them and some people don't."

He also said that even more was done this year, including having a session at C-TOPS for incoming freshmen, to improve the rush week. "It's a pretty streamlined program compared to other schools," he said.

Veronica Creech, a sophomore rushee from Greensboro, agreed that the system seemed to work well. "I think it does a pretty good job," Creech said. "I don't know many people who have been unhappy since they've joined one."

Milam said the benefits of running such an organized rush were readily apparent. "Every rushee has an opportunity to see what every house is like," Milam said. She said there was a 75 percent pledge rate last year. And she said she feels the Panhellenic

Council's rush system aided all of the sororities.

"We like to support the entire Greek system instead of just one house," Milam said.

The rushees also seemed to think that the system worked well. Liebe Wesley, a sophomore from Winston-Salem, said she thought the structured nature of the process made it work more efficiently. "I think if it was too chaotic, people wouldn't want as much to do with it," she said.

Wesley also said the grouping of rushees with specific rush counselors helped to make the process go more smoothly, by telling students how to best approach the whole week. "They (rush counselors) really do help," she said.

While Binder agreed that the sorority rush period and the fraternity rush period were quite different in nature, he didn't think the more structured sorority system was all that incongruous with the more relaxed fraternity method.

"They get very similar results, they just do it differently," Binder said. "It's not any better or worse, it's just different."

KINNAIRD

FROM PAGE 1

cared about our students and recognized that they are a viable part of our population that needs to be provided for."

Her style of government is perhaps best-revealed by her own opinion of her high points in office, which she considers her work with the Carr Court neighborhood. When an elderly constituent contacted her about the neighborhood's decrepit state and rampant drug problems, Kinnaird visited the area and set out to clean things up.

The end result was a cleaned-up neighborhood and a new community center built entirely from volunteer work that has been a smashing success with the area's children. With a grant from Americorps as well, the center became a spot for the area's children to receive necessary tutoring.

Kinnaird said the program was "a god-send." "We had the wall lined with papers - '100,' 'good,' 'A,' 'keep up the good work' - these are kids who were failing before," she said.

No wonder her dismay that Fred Heineman voted to take away the money

given to the Americorps program. She said that he hedged along party lines, saying that the program was an example of federal bureaucrats in action.

"That's where politics is sick on the national level," she said. "To me it is infuriating that they are so removed from the local level and the local level needs."

Kinnaird said she didn't consider her position as a woman in local politics to be much of a big deal. "On a local level, women are so involved that I don't even think it's even a question," she said. "I don't think people even think about the difference between men and women."

And she has little worries that the recent Republican resurgence across the country will slow down women's advancement. "I think you're going to see women working their way all the way up," she said.

Working up was tougher for Kinnaird. She went back to school at NCCU to get her law degree while in office, because she never had the chance in her college years.

"Being brought up in the 1950s, women were either teachers or librarians or nurses or musicians, and I was a musician," Kinnaird said. "So finally I decided I was

going to do what I wanted to."

"It was a killer," she said of law school. "But I have no regrets. It's something I always wanted to do."

Her law degree has enabled her to work with North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services, Inc. as a civil lawyer.

For the future, Kinnaird sees a local government consumed with the problem of outside interests trying to develop the rapidly expanding area. "How we manage growth is probably the most important thing facing this area," she said. "We're trying to keep our identity as a small town, which may be impossible."

And she also sees the specter of race inequality looming over the nation as a whole. "I think that's the most serious problem facing us on all levels," she said.

She said she was worried that the recent nationwide conservative swing will have a negative impact on the country's blacks, who she feels will have a tougher time improving their status in the political scene.

When her last term as mayor expires this winter, Kinnaird is thinking of running for the state Senate, although she said there are many obstacles in her way. And

even when Mayor Kinnaird becomes just Citizen Kinnaird, she doesn't think there will be much of a change.

"No, I'll still be involved," she said. "I love the town, and I love the people."

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