Effects of Involvement on Students’ Food Choices
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Problem:
- Obesity is a national issue and affects all age groups, including college students.
- Determining what influences college students’ food choices is a complex problem.
- Effective strategies are needed to address this issue.

What is Involvement?
- Originally designed for marketing research to determine how important and relevant a product and/or decision to purchase a product is to an individual to develop effective marketing strategies that influence consumers’ choices.
- Previous research shows involvement can be used to determine how important and relevant food decisions are to college students to develop effective nutrition interventions.

Purpose:
- To explore the relationship between involvement and college students’ food decisions at UW-Stout.

Research Questions:
1) What are the differences in involvement in making food decisions among UW-Stout undergraduate students?
2) Which aspects of food decisions are associated with gender differences?
3) Does involvement correlate with obesity?

Methodology:
- 44 completed surveys out of a random sample 400 UW-Stout undergraduate students.
- Qualtrics online survey.
- Survey tool obtained with permission from Dr. Annette Levi at California State University, Fresno.
- Statistical analyses completed using SPSS version 21.0 and utilized independent samples t-tests to determine significant differences between males and females and a Pearson’s correlation to determine if any relationship existed between composite involvement scores and BMI scores.
- Approved by UW-Stout IRB.

Results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composite Involvement Scores</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involvement Level</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 37

- Although involvement scores were higher for females (M = 57.0) than males (M = 53.1), there were no significant differences between them, t(35) = −1.03, p > 0.05.

Food Decision Factors:
- Higher importance mean scores on taste, convenience, appearance, and label information for females.
- Higher importance mean scores on quality and healthiness for males.
- Similar importance mean scores on mood and organic content for both genders.
- Differences were not found to be significant.
- Overall, participants considered cost, taste, and quality to be the most important factors that influence their food choices.

Involvement and Obesity

- No correlation found between involvement and obesity (n = 43) (r = −0.098, p > 0.05).

Conclusions:
- Although results from current research are similar to a previous study, further research is needed to see if significant differences can be found in a larger, more diverse sample.
- Gender differences may exist in level of involvement and factors influencing food choices.
- Consumer involvement may be a useful application, when developing effective nutrition interventions to reach those who may not see food-choice decisions as important or relevant.
- Dining halls and other on-campus dining locations should offer more quality, low-cost, healthy items.