Validation of a Novel Objective Measurement Tool for

Reward Sensitivity and Hedonic Responses to Food

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Convenient access to high fat and high sugar (or palatable) foods in today’s modern food environment is implicated in overeating, overweight, and obesity. A particularly useful construct for understanding the risk for this global health problem is Reward Sensitivity (RS) - the tendency to be highly rewarded by, and motivated to approach, pleasurable stimuli in our environment. Although theorists acknowledge an intimate connection between emotions and the RS personality trait, most self-report assessments fail to account for emotional responses in their item content. The *International Affective Picture System* (IAPS) was developed to elicit emotions in a visual laboratory task, and IAPS emotion ratings tend to map onto current measures of approach and behavioural activation. To date, no study has studies RS and emotional reactivity in the context of hedonic overeating using both an objective measure and self-report scales. The current study will employ the IAPS as an object measure of RS, and will compare it to validated self-report measures of RS. The study has two aims: i) to test the reliability and validity of a novel objective measure of RS with validated self-report RS measures; ii) to extend previous research investigating associations between RS and indices of problematic eating by employing the objective measure of RS in conjunction with hedonic overeating, preferences for palatable food, and food cravings. It is hypothesized that the IAPS measure will be positively correlated with self-report assessments of RS, and that the IAPS ratings will be positively related to increased hedonic eating, preference for palatable food, and food craving.