Binge Eating Disorder:  
Stress is a trigger for a specific type of eating behavior called binge eating (BED), which is characterized   
by uncontrolled, rapid consumption of excess amounts of food.   
Unlike individuals with bulimia nervosa, individuals with BED do not engage in compensatory behaviors   
following a binge; therefore, obesity is highly co-morbid with BED.   
Few studies have attempted to compare eating behavior following a stressor in BED versus non-BED   
individuals.   
Cortisol response to stress may play a causal role in the binge eating associated with BED.   
The hypothesized heightened cortisol response to stress found in BED may predispose individuals with   
the disorder to eat more palatable foods than do non-BED individuals when a psychological stressor   
arises.  
Subjects: Twenty college women aged 18-22 classified with and without BED  
Stressor: A public speaking task followed by a math task  
Perception of the stressor was assessed – A scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being not stressful at all and 10   
being the most stress imaginable.  
Baseline and Post Task Cortisol were measured  
Time spent looking at food and preference for food after stressor were measured