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**An Exploration of Racial/Ethnic Differences in the Association between Perfectionism and Disordered Eating in College Students**

Neha J. Goel, BA, C. Blair Burnette, MS, & Suzanne E. Mazzeo, PhD

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### Background

- **Perfectionism** is considered both a genetic and sociocultural eating disorder (ED) risk factor (Culbert, Racine, & Klump, 2015; Lilenfeld et al., 2000; Lilenfeld et al., 2006; Wade et al., 2008).
- Research has consistently demonstrated that individually-oriented dimensions of perfectionism (i.e., concerns over mistakes, high personal standards, and doubts about action), are strongly related to ED pathology (Bulik et al., 2003; Castro-Fornies et al., 2007). Less is known about the contribution of parent-oriented dimensions of perfectionism (i.e., concerns over performance expectations, and parental criticisms (PC)).
- Parent-oriented dimensions of perfectionism might be particularly relevant to ED pathology among certain cultural groups, such as those from collectivistic and interdependent societies.
- Few studies have investigated these effects within racially/ethnically diverse samples (Bardone-Cone et al., 2007).
- This study examined associations among PE, PC, and ED symptoms across different racial/ethnic groups.

### Methods

- College students completed a battery of questionnaires online assessing for disordered eating and perfectionism.
- **Perfectionism: Frost-Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale** (F-MPS; Frost et al., 1990)
  - PE = parental expectations
  - PC = parental criticisms
- **ED symptoms: EDE-Q** (Fairburn & Beglin, 2008)
  - Loss-of-control (LOC) eating
  - Purging behaviors (vomiting, laxative, diuretic misuse)
  - Global eating pathology (EDE-Q Global score)
  - ED risk status (EDE-Q Global < 4.0)

### Data Analyses

- **Multiple and logistic regressions** examined the association between parent-oriented perfectionism and each ED index.
- Analyses were conducted by racial/ethnic group.
- All analyses controlled for gender.

### Sample Characteristics

- N = 1622 college students
- Mean age = 19.64 (SD=3.34)
- Gender = Women: 72.4% (n=1174), Men: 26.7% (n=433); Other: 0.9% (n=15)
- Racial/ethnic groups = White – 44.0% (n=714); Black – 20.3% (n=329); Latinx – 6.7% (n=108); Asian – 17.9% (n=290); Multi-Racial – 11.1% (n=180)

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### Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EDE Global</th>
<th>LOC Eating</th>
<th>Purging</th>
<th>ED Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R²</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>ΔR²</td>
<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>.257</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frost PC</td>
<td></td>
<td>.169</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frost PE</td>
<td></td>
<td>.040</td>
<td></td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Black          |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Gender         |    | .185 |    | 3.30 | 1.65 | 3.23 |
| Frost PC       |    | .240 | .130 | 1.65 | .116 | 2.64 | .101 | 1.47 | .109 |
| Frost PE       |    | .096 |    | 1.10 | .69 | 1.46 |

| Latinx         |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Gender         |    | .304 |    | 3.09 | 1.26 | 2.00 |
| Frost PC       |    | .184 | .151 | 1.31 | .077 | .006 | 1.50 | .047 |
| Frost PE       |    | .170 | .094 | 1.31 | 1.23 | 1.24 |

| Asian/Hawaiian/ |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Pacific Islander|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Gender         |    | .092 |    | 1.86 | .70 | 1.04 |
| Frost PC       |    | .152 | .098 | 1.12 | .027 | 1.49 | .070 | 1.65 | .156 |
| Frost PE       |    | .169 | .086 | 1.00 | 1.85 | 2.10 |

| Multi-Racial   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Gender         |    | .202 |    | 1.98 | .46 | 1.60 |
| Frost PC       |    | .346 | .125 | 1.17 | .032 | .06 | .102 | .49 | .114 |
| Frost PE       |    | -.161 |    | .84 | 1.62 | 2.41 |

Note: Bolded coefficients are significant at p < .05. Standardized coefficients are presented. OR=Odds Ratio. Gender coded 0=men, 1=woman.

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### Discussion

**Main Findings:**
- The relations between specific aspects of parent-oriented perfectionism differ among cultural groups and are associated with ED symptoms in college students.
- PC more relevant to ED pathology than PE overall.

**Limitations:** small sample size of Latinx students led to low power to detect effects; did not test for gender differences; generalizability is limited to college students, thus, future research should recruit community samples

**Conclusions:**
- One of the first studies to examine differences in parent-oriented perfectionism by racial/ethnic group status.
- Findings suggest that parent-oriented perfectionism, particularly PC, might be important to include in clinical assessment and treatment with students at-risk of EDs.

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