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

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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-Fornieles et al., 2007). Less is known about the contribution of **parent-oriented dimensions, specifically parental expectations (PE) and parental criticisms (PC)**.
- Parent-oriented dimensions of perfectionism might be particularly to 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)

## Results

	EDE Global		LOC Eating		Purging		ED Risk	
	$\beta$	$R^2$ $\Delta R^2$	OR	$R^2$	OR	$R^2$	OR	$R^2$
<b>White</b>								
Gender	<b>.257</b>		<b>2.08</b>		1.88		<b>3.09</b>	
Frost PC	<b>.169</b>	.110	1.50	<b>.065</b>	<b>2.09</b>	<b>.066</b>	1.17	<b>.079</b>
Frost PE	.040	<b>.039</b>	<b>.90</b>		.67		1.37	
<b>Black</b>								
Gender	<b>.185</b>		3.30		1.65		<b>3.23</b>	
Frost PC	<b>.240</b>	.130	<b>1.65</b>	<b>.116</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>.101</b>	1.47	<b>.109</b>
Frost PE	.096	<b>.093</b>	1.10		.69		1.46	
<b>Latinx</b>								
Gender	<b>.304</b>		<b>3.09</b>		1.26		2.00	
Frost PC	.184	.151	1.31	<b>.077</b>	.77	<b>.006</b>	1.50	<b>.047</b>
Frost PE	.170	<b>.094</b>	1.31		1.23		1.24	
<b>Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>								
Gender	.092		1.86		.70		1.04	
Frost PC	<b>.152</b>	.098	1.12	<b>.027</b>	1.49	<b>.070</b>	1.65	<b>.156</b>
Frost PE	<b>.169</b>	<b>.086</b>	1.00		1.85		<b>2.10</b>	
<b>Multi-Racial</b>								
Gender	<b>.202</b>		1.98		.46		1.60	
Frost PC	<b>.346</b>	.125	1.17	<b>.032</b>	.06	<b>.102</b>	<b>.49</b>	<b>.114</b>
Frost PE	-.161	<b>.079</b>	.84		1.62		<b>2.41</b>	

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

## 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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