The Effect of Perfectionism on Eating Disordered Behavior

While researchers agree that there is a definite link between perfectionism and eating disorders, there is need for a causal explanation of this link. Our study aimed to look at the interaction between perfectionism and performance evaluation on subsequent food consumption preferences. Subjects were prescreened for high and low scores on the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale. They subsequently participated in a series of semantic memory tasks and were randomly assigned to either a positive or negative feedback condition. This was followed by a food preference task in which they were asked to rate their liking and desire to eat fifty common food items. We hypothesized that those who prescreened high in perfectionism and who were in the negative feedback condition would have the lowest ratings on desire to eat/liking for the food items. If this pattern of results holds, it would suggest that when someone with perfectionist tendencies believes they perform poorly on an evaluative task relative to others, they may tend to exhibit symptoms of eating disordered behavior including a lowered interest in eating and liking of food in general.