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## The Relationship between Food Addiction & Self-Worth

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## Social Science

### Oral

Title: The Relationship between Food Addiction & Self-Worth

Presenter: Buhre, Madison

Faculty Sponsor: Jameson, Molly

#### **Abstract:**

Disordered eating behaviors are defined as obsessive actions surrounding a person's eating patterns, body shape, and weight (National Institute of Mental Health) and impact an estimated 21.5 million people (American Addiction Centers) in the United States. Food addiction is a phenomenon closely tied with disordered eating behaviors (Russell, 2013), where little research has examined the role of intrapsychological factors, particularly self-worth, in both the development of food addictive behaviors and the efficacy of treatment. Current research evaluates the role of self-esteem in individuals with food addiction; however, studies have found it as a less accurate portrayal of the self-concept due to the fluctuation and subjective nature of its evaluation (Neff & Vonk, 2009), with calls for a more comprehensive state of measurement (Hunter, Jason, & Keys, 2013). The purpose of the current study is to close the gap in our knowledge regarding the role that self-worth plays in both the development and treatment of disordered eating behaviors in relation to food addiction. Five female participants, all with diagnosed disordered eating behaviors, were recruited through the National Eating Disorder online research forum. They completed online measures including a demographic questionnaire, a structured interview with open-ended items asking about their perceptions of the causes of their disordered eating behavior, their therapy history and perceptions of success, and their beliefs in the role of their self-worth in their disordered eating and treatment. Analysis of interview results reveal several consistent themes: the disordered eating behavior was a body-directed form of self-punishment in response to social influences, and self-worth was seen by participants as being positively correlated to their success in treatment. Additional results are currently being analyzed. These results can inform the field of the importance of self-worth in the development of disordered eating behaviors as well as in the efficacy of treatment.