

COGNITIVE LINKS BETWEEN FEAR OF FAILURE AND PERFECTIONISM

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ABSTRACT: This study investigated links between three forms of perfectionism and beliefs associated with fear of failure (FF). College students ($N = 372$) enrolled in physical activity classes completed the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale and Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory in a single session. After controlling for other forms of perfectionism, only socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP) was strongly associated with beliefs that failure led to aversive interpersonal consequences (i.e., important others losing interest, upsetting important others). Other-oriented perfectionism (OOP) exhibited a weak negative relation with beliefs that failure would lead to devaluation of one's self-estimate; individuals who held the highest standards for others' behavior had the weakest beliefs that failure would lead to them devaluing their self-estimate. Self-oriented perfectionism (SOP) was not associated with any beliefs that failure led to aversive consequences; however, when SOP and OOP were simultaneously elevated, they contributed positively to fears of experiencing shame and embarrassment (above and beyond main effects of SPP). Collectively these findings indicated that FF was not ubiquitous with all forms of perfectionism because the specific beliefs about the consequences of failure that underlie different forms of perfectionism varied tremendously.

KEY WORDS: perfectionism; fear of failure; achievement; avoidance; motivation; sport.

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INTRODUCTION

Cognitively-oriented therapists often see clients whose perfectionism has led them to maladaptive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Perfectionism is generally viewed as a maladaptive characteristic because of its many undesirable consequences for perfectionists and their loved ones (Hewitt & Flett, 2002; for alternative perspectives, see Enns & Cox, 2002; Hamachek, 1978; Hollender, 1965; Pacht, 1984). Fear of failure is often mentioned as a primary motivation underlying perfectionism but little is known about relations between these constructs. Cognitively-oriented therapists in particular may benefit from understanding the extent to which cognitions associated with fear of failure motivate perfectionism as they attempt to restructure these thoughts to alleviate clients' problems. Thus, this study tested links between cognitions associated with fear of failure and three forms of perfectionism.

Perfectionism

Perfectionism is generally conceptualized as a "striving for flawlessness" (Hewitt & Flett, 2002, p. 5). One of the major theoretical advances in the perfectionism literature involved the identification of different forms of perfectionism. Although several multidimensional models of perfectionism exist (e.g., Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990; Slaney, Rice, & Ashby, 2002), the most well-established model differentiates between other-oriented perfectionism (OOP), self-oriented perfectionism (SOP), and socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP) (Hewitt & Flett, 1991b).

Socially prescribed perfectionism involves individuals feeling pressured to be perfect because of beliefs that significant others have excessively high standards for them to meet (Hewitt & Flett, 1991b). SPP has been linked to a variety of maladaptive consequences such as depression (Cox, Enns, Clara, 2002; Hewitt & Flett, 1991a, 1993; Hewitt, Flett, Ediger, 1996), suicidal ideation (Hewitt, Flett, & Turnbull-Donovan, 1992), anxiety (Antony, Purdon, Huta, & Swinson, 1998; Saboonchi & Lundh, 1997), disordered eating (Hewitt, Flett, Ediger, 1995), and maladaptive cognitions (Blankstein & Winkworth, 2004). Recent evidence suggests that individuals internalizing SPP standards have a fear of negative evaluation and that their performance is the result of a motive to avoid failure (Neumeister, 2004).

Other-oriented perfectionism involves setting unrealistic standards for others by expecting that they will be perfect and stringently evaluating their performance (Hewitt & Flett, 1991b). OOP is the only form of perfectionism in which individuals apply their high performance standards to another person's performance instead of their own. Accordingly, OOP entails interpersonal frustrations (i.e. cynicism, loneliness; Burns, 1983; Hollender, 1965), narcissism, distrust, hostility, and blame (Hewitt & Flett, 1991b).

Self-oriented perfectionism involves the tendency to set unrealistic standards for one's self and to harshly evaluate and criticize one's behavior as a result of a drive to attain perfection and avoid failure (Hewitt & Flett, 1991b). SOP has been linked to numerous maladaptive outcomes including depression (Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein, & Gray, 1998; Hewitt & Flett, 1991a, 1993; Hewitt et al., 1996), suicidal ideation (Hamilton & Schweitzer, 2000; Hewitt, Flett, & Weber, 1994; Hewitt, Newton, Flett, & Callander, 1997), anorexia (Cockell et al., 2002; Hewitt et al., 1995), rumination (Besser, Flett, & Hewitt, 2004), performance dissatisfaction (Besser et al., 2004; Enns, Cox, Sareen, & Freeman, 2001; Mor, Day, Flett, & Hewitt, 1995), burnout (Gould, Tuffey, Udry, & Loehr, 1997), and unpleasant affective responses to failure feedback (Besser et al., 2004).

Accumulating evidence clearly indicates that all three forms of perfectionism have at least some maladaptive features. As such, it may be profitable to understand the extent to which various cognitions are associated with each form of perfectionism. Given perfectionists' sensitivity to and preoccupation with avoiding failure, some of their maladaptive cognitions are likely to concern aversive aspects of failing.

Fear of Failure

In the achievement motivation literature, fear of failure (FF) represents an avoidance motive based on anticipatory shame and humiliation associated with failure (Atkinson, 1957). More recent work has conceptualized fear of failure as a tendency to appraise threat and feel anxious during situations that involve the possibility of failing. From a cognitive-motivational-relational perspective, failure may be threatening to individuals who have learned to associate it with aversive consequences. Five specific consequences of failing that have been linked to a higher-order general FF involve (a) experiencing

shame and embarrassment, (b) devaluing one's self-estimate, (c) having an uncertain future, (d) having important others lose interest, and (e) upsetting important others (Conroy, 2001; Conroy, Poczwardowski, & Henschen, 2001; Conroy, Willow, & Metzler, 2002). Individuals who believe that these consequences are likely when they fail should be more likely to appraise evaluative situations as threatening. Thus, the strength of beliefs in the likelihood of aversive consequences of failing can index an individual's general FF level.

In addition to links with a higher-order general FF factor, beliefs in different aversive consequences of failing also have been linked with distinct cognitive and motivational profiles (Conroy, 2004). For example, fears of experiencing shame and embarrassment appear to be the only FF-related beliefs that predict achievement goal adoption. Fears of devaluing one's self-estimate are uniquely associated with a lack of purposeful engagement in an activity. In contrast, fears of having an uncertain future are the only FF-related belief associated with high levels of intrinsic motivation and low levels of amotivation. Ironically, individuals who fear important others losing interest in them when they fail treat themselves in a more neglectful manner while failing and individuals who fear upsetting important others are less affirming of themselves while failing. These results suggest that focusing on the beliefs that underlie the FF motive can increase understanding of the cognitive and motivational aspects of avoidance achievement strivings.

Hypothesized Links between Fear of Failure and Perfectionism

Conceptually, FF bears the greatest resemblance to SPP because both capture aversive relational experiences oriented around an individual's personal achievement failures. In contrast, SOP and OOP describe less self-conscious experiences and focus instead on the target of one's high-performance standards. Thus, consistent with previous research (Flett, Blankstein, Hewitt, & Koledin, 1992; Hewitt, Flett, Besser, Sherry, & McGee, 2003), FF-related beliefs were expected to account for more variance in SPP than in SOP or OOP scores (after controlling for variance associated with the other forms of perfectionism).

With regard to specific predictors of perfectionism scores, several hypotheses were possible. First, SPP involves a focus on external demands for one's performance so this form of perfectionism should

be positively associated with beliefs that aversive interpersonal consequences of failing are likely (e.g., having important others lose interest, upsetting important others). Given that self-conscious emotions can emerge from perceptions of how one might be evaluated by others, it also was possible that SPP would be positively associated with beliefs that failure leads to shame and embarrassment. SPP was not expected to be associated with beliefs that failure leads to devaluing one's self-estimate or having an uncertain future.

OOP is an interpersonal form of perfectionism but, in contrast to SPP, the focus of OOP is on the level of others' performance instead of on the individual's perceptions of others' standards for her or his performance. Thus, OOP was not expected to be significantly associated with beliefs about any consequences of one's own failures.

The third form of perfectionism, SOP is intrapersonal in nature because it involves having high standards for one's own performance. Although some have argued that SOP is an adaptive form of perfectionism because it reflects high personal standards and conscientiousness, SOP also has been linked to a number of undesirable consequences as well (Campbell & Di Paula, 2002). In this study, SOP scores were expected to be positively associated with beliefs about intrapersonal consequences of failure (e.g., experiencing shame and embarrassment, devaluing one's self-estimate). SOP was not expected to be linked to interpersonal consequences of failure or to having an uncertain future.

Purpose

The aim of this study was to establish links between FF-related beliefs and perfectionism. SPP was predicted to be positively related to beliefs about interpersonal (i.e. important others losing interest, upsetting important others) and self-conscious, affective (i.e., experiencing shame and embarrassment) consequences of failing. SOP was hypothesized to be linked positively with beliefs about intrapersonal consequences of failing (e.g., fears of shame and embarrassment, fears of devaluing ones self-estimate). OOP was not expected to be associated with beliefs about the consequences of one's own failures.

METHOD

Participants and Procedures

Participants ($N = 372$) in this study were recruited from physical activity classes at two large universities. The majority of participants were male ($n_{\text{male}} = 221$, $n_{\text{female}} = 150$, one participant did not report sex), and Caucasian ($n_{\text{Caucasian}} = 236$, $n_{\text{Hispanic}} = 46$, $n_{\text{Asian-American}} = 39$, $n_{\text{African-American}} = 9$, $n_{\text{Native American}} = 2$, $n_{\text{Other}} = 34$, $n_{\text{no response}} = 6$) with a mean age of 21.2 years ($SD = 2.7$). Participants were recruited at the beginning of class sessions by a research assistant who asked them to volunteer for a study described as assessing the relationship between various achievement-related personality constructs. In exchange for extra credit in their course, consenting participants completed a battery of measures that included the measures of perfectionism and fear of failure described below.

Instruments

Perfectionism was assessed using the 45-item Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991b). The MPS measures three dimensions of perfectionism: OOP, SOP, and SPP. Using a rating scale ranging from 1 (*disagree*) to 7 (*agree*), participants rated statements such as “I have high expectations for the people who are important to me” (OOP), “When I am working on something, I cannot relax until it is perfect” (SOP), and “The people around me expect me to succeed at everything I do” (SPP). After reverse-scoring items as needed, responses were averaged to calculate scores for each form of perfectionism, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of perfectionism. Previous research has shown that the MPS has acceptable levels of internal consistency (Cox et al., 2002; Frost, Heimberg, Holt, Mattia, & Neubauer, 1993; Hewitt & Flett, 1991b) and exhibits theoretically-meaningful relationships between the three subscales and other measures of perfectionism (Cox et al., 2002; Hewitt & Flett, 1991b).

Fear of failure was assessed using the 25-item Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI; Conroy et al., 2002). The PFAI measures five lower-order fears of failing: Fears of Experiencing Shame and Embarrassment (FSE), Fears of Devaluing One’s Self-Estimate (FDSE), Fears of Having an Uncertain Future (FUF), Fears of

Important Others Losing Interest (FIOLI), and Fears of Upsetting Important Others (FUIO). Each item began with one of two stems, “When I am failing...” or “When I am not succeeding...,” and was followed by an aversive consequence of failing. Participants rated how strongly they believed each aversive consequences of failing would occur to them on a scale ranging from -2 (*do not believe at all*) to 0 (*believe 50% of the time*) to $+2$ (*believe 100% of the time*). A constant of $+3$ was added to responses to rescale the items from 1 to 5. Scale scores were calculated by averaging responses to items on each scale (with one item reverse-scored on the FUF scale). Previous research using these five scales with college student samples has shown acceptable levels of internal consistency, temporal stability, and a theoretically-expected pattern of relations with other relevant constructs (e.g., achievement goals, contextual motivation, performance anxiety, self-talk, state hope prior to a performance; Conroy, 2004; Conroy et al., 2002; Conroy, Metzler, & Hofer, 2003).

Data Analysis

Pairwise deletion was used in all analyses due to the limited amount of missing data at the level of item responses (.3%) and scale scores (.6%). After examining bivariate correlations between MPS and PFAI scale scores, three separate hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to estimate (a) unique relations between the five FF-related beliefs and each form of perfectionism, and (b) the amount of variance in each perfectionism score that could be accounted for by FF-related beliefs. When predicting each perfectionism score, the other two perfectionism scores were entered in the first step to control variance common to other forms of perfectionism. In the second step of each model, the five variables of central interest (i.e., FF-related beliefs) were entered simultaneously to predict the unique variance in each perfectionism score. Given the expected collinearity between predictor variables, both standardized regression coefficients and structure coefficients were estimated (Courville & Thompson, 2001; Thompson & Borrello, 1985). Structure coefficients represent zero-order correlations between each predictor variable and the predicted value of the outcome variable, and are more likely to generalize across samples than are regression coefficients.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics for all scale scores are presented in Table 1. Responses to all scales exhibited acceptable internal consistency. As expected, the three perfectionism scales were moderately intercorrelated ($M_r = .36$, $SD = .03$, all $p < .01$) and the five FF-belief scales were strongly intercorrelated ($M_r = .49$, $SD = .12$, all $p < .01$). Table 2 presents bivariate correlations between the three perfectionism dimensions and the five FF-related beliefs for the entire sample as well as for females and males separately. In general, FF-related beliefs tended to be positively associated with all three forms of perfectionism. FF-related beliefs were most strongly associated with SPP scores and least strongly associated with OOP scores. The pattern of correlations was generally quite similar for females and males.

Three simultaneous regression models were tested to examine how well FF-related beliefs predicted each perfectionism score. Table 3 summarizes the results from these regression analyses. Both OOP ($b = .23$, $p < .01$) and SOP ($b = .29$, $p < .01$) positively predicted SPP scores, $R^2 = .18$, $F(2, 359) = 39.65$, $p < .01$. The five FF-related beliefs accounted for an additional 24% of the variance in SPP scores, $R^2 = .43$, $F(7, 354) = 37.32$, $p < .01$. All five FF-related beliefs were positively associated with predicted SPP scores in this regression model but only FIOLI and FUIO scores made unique contributions in the prediction of SPP scores. Note that when the five FF-related

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>a</i>
<i>Fear of failure</i>				
Fears of experiencing shame & embarrassment	3.04	.83	1.00–5.00	.78
Fears of devaluing one's self-estimate	2.55	.88	1.00–5.00	.73
Fears of having an uncertain future	2.84	.93	1.00–5.00	.76
Fears of important others losing interest	2.25	.89	1.00–4.80	.83
Fears of upsetting important others	2.71	.97	1.00–5.00	.82
<i>Perfectionism</i>				
SPP	3.25	.85	1.13–5.80	.81
OOP	3.92	.74	1.47–6.33	.73
SOP	4.51	1.04	1.60–6.93	.88

Note. Fear of Failure and MPS means reflect average score per item rather than the mean based on summing across all subscale items.

Table 2**Bivariate Correlations between Multiple Dimensions of Perfectionism and Fear of Failure-Related Beliefs**

	<i>FSE</i>	<i>FDSE</i>	<i>FUF</i>	<i>FIOLI</i>	<i>FUIO</i>
<i>Entire sample</i>					
SPP	.47**	.34**	.37**	.49**	.47**
OOP	.16**	-.05	.03	.16**	.18**
SOP	.22**	.15**	.09	.17**	.14**
<i>Women</i>					
SPP	.49**	.41**	.37**	.49**	.43**
OOP	.14	-.05	.00	.12	.11
SOP	.18*	.14	.08	.12	.10
<i>Men</i>					
SPP	.47**	.28**	.37**	.49**	.50**
OOP	.19**	-.04	.06	.17*	.24**
SOP	.23**	.16*	.10	.22**	.17*

Note. FSE = Fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, FDSE = Fear of devaluing one's self-estimate, FUF = Fear of an uncertain future, FIOI = Fear of important others losing interest, FUIO = Fear of upsetting important others. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

beliefs were added to the SPP model, the standardized regression coefficients for OOP ($b = .18$, $p < .01$) and SOP ($b = .21$, $p < .01$) did not change substantially.

In the second regression model, both SOP ($b = .29$, $p < .01$) and SPP ($b = .22$, $p < .01$) positively predicted OOP scores, $R^2 = .18$, $F(2, 359) = 40.44$, $p < .01$. The five FF-related beliefs accounted for an additional 4% of the variance in OOP scores, $R^2 = .23$, $F(7, 354) = 14.81$, $p < .01$. Only FDSE scores contributed uniquely to the prediction of OOP scores after controlling the other two perfectionism dimensions. Individuals who believed that failure would lead them to devalue their self-estimate had low OOP scores. Although the other four FF-related beliefs (i.e., FSE, FUF, FIOI, FUIO) did not aid in predicting OOP scores above and beyond FDSE and the other two perfectionism scores, all four beliefs were positively associated with predicted OOP scores from this regression model. Once again, when the five FF-related beliefs were added to the OOP model, the standardized regression coefficients for SOP ($b = .30$, $p < .01$) and SPP ($b = .24$, $p < .01$) did not change substantially.

In the final regression model, both OOP ($b = .28$, $p < .01$) and SPP ($b = .28$, $p < .01$) positively predicted SOP scores, $R^2 = .21$,

Table 3**Standardized Regression and Structure Coefficients for Models Predicting Perfectionism Scores**

	<i>FSE</i>		<i>FDSE</i>		<i>FUF</i>		<i>FIOLI</i>		<i>FUIO</i>	
	<i>b</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>S</i>
SPP	.04	.72**	.09	.52**	.09	.57**	.22**	.74**	.22**	.73**
OOP	.08	.34**	-.23**	-.11*	-.02	.11*	.01	.29**	.06	.38**
SOP	.11	.47**	.10	.33**	-.06	.23**	-.05	.35**	-.09	.30**

Note. FSE = Fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, FDSE = Fear of devaluing one's self-estimate, FUF = Fear of an uncertain future, FIOLI = Fear of important others losing interest, FUIO = Fear of upsetting important others, SPP = Socially prescribed perfectionism, OOP = Other-prescribed perfectionism, SOP = Self-oriented perfectionism. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

$F(2, 359) = 47.34, p < .01$. The five FF-related beliefs accounted for an additional 2% of the variance in SOP scores, $R^2 = .23, F(7, 354) = 14.76, p < .01$. None of the FF-related beliefs made a significant contribution to the predicted SOP score after controlling for the other two dimensions of perfectionism but all five FF-related beliefs were positively associated with predicted SOP values from this model. When the five FF-related beliefs were added to the SOP model, the standardized regression coefficients for OOP ($b = .30, p < .01$) and SPP ($b = .28, p < .01$) did not change substantially.

In light of these results, a set of supplemental analyses was conducted in which the three perfectionism scores predicted each FF-related belief. In the second step of these models, interactions between the perfectionism scores were added to the model. In all five models, SPP positively predicted FF-related beliefs (all p 's $< .01$). OOP scores negatively predicted beliefs that failure led to devaluing one's self-estimate ($p < .01$). The only statistically significant interaction involved the SOP and OOP scores interacting to predict FSE scores ($p < .05$). As seen in Fig. 1, individuals who had simultaneously high SOP and OOP scores had the highest FSE scores.

DISCUSSION

This study tested relations between FF-related beliefs and three dimensions of perfectionism. Results indicated that FF-related beliefs

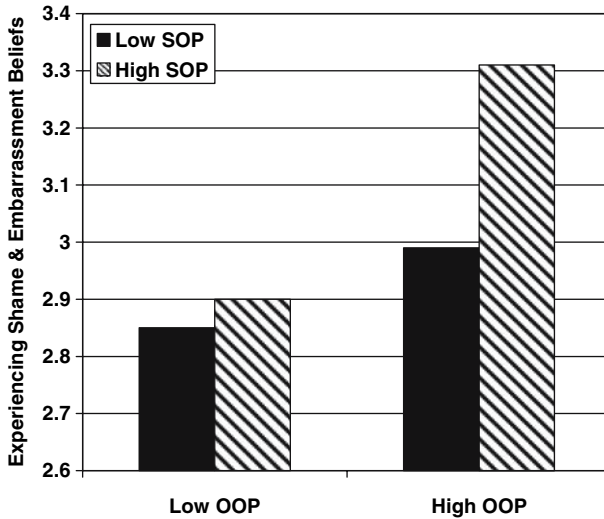


Figure 1. Interaction between SOP and OOP scores predicting beliefs that failure leads to shame and embarrassment. Median splits were used to create high and low perfectionism scores for this figure.

predicted SPP scores better than OOP or SOP scores (and SPP predicted FF-related beliefs better than either OOP or SOP). In previous research, general FF (the higher-order representation of the five beliefs assessed in this study) was positively associated with SPP and not significantly associated with either OOP or SOP (Hewitt et al., 2003). The present results replicated that finding and extended it to clarify which specific FF-related beliefs in particular were implicated in SPP.

It was not surprising that SPP was linked to beliefs about aversive interpersonal consequences of failing because SPP involves a focus on other's expectations for one's performance. This finding has important implications for what might be expected as a consequence of SPP. For example, achievement motivation researchers now view achievement motives like FF as antecedents of achievement goal adoption (Elliot, 1999). Subsequent research has elaborated that beliefs that failure leads to shame and embarrassment are the only FF-related beliefs that have a unique relationship with achievement goal adoption (Conroy, 2004). Thus, the present findings indicate that it may be unlikely for SPP by itself to predispose individuals to adopt particular achievement goals because SPP does not appear to be energized primarily by the possibility of feeling shame. Likewise,

Conroy (2004) found that neither of the interpersonal fears of failing was associated with athletes' contextual motivation for their sport (i.e., the reasons they participate in that activity over time). Thus, the motivational consequences of SPP may be somewhat limited.

On the other hand, the interpersonal fears of failing that characterized SPP have been associated with a characteristic pattern of self-talk while failing (Conroy, 2004). Beliefs that failure leads to important others losing interest in you and upsetting important others have been linked to increased levels of self-neglect (e.g., giving up on themselves) and decreased levels of self-affirmation (e.g., encouraging themselves), respectively. These findings suggest that socially prescribed perfectionists who believe in these aversive interpersonal consequences of failing will exhibit high levels of hostile differentiation in their self-talk while failing. Whether their insecurity about interpersonal relationships derives from the self-perceptions that led them to be hostile and differentiated or their interpersonal relationships set the template for these self-perceptions is an open empirical question. In any event, it appears that the cognitions involved in SPP involve fears of others being hostile, as well as the self being hostile and differentiated.

After controlling for SPP, FF-related beliefs accounted for minimal additional variance in OOP and SOP scores (and OOP and SOP scores accounted for minimal additional variance in FF-related beliefs). This finding leads to the conclusion that relationships between FF and perfectionism exist largely through the dimension of SPP. Conceptually, OOP was unlikely to be associated with achievement motives like FF because it involved standards for others' performances instead of one's own performances. Indeed, participants' beliefs about the likelihood of various consequences of failing contributed very little to the prediction of OOP scores once SOP and SPP scores were in the model. The one belief that was weakly linked with OOP scores indicated the other-oriented perfectionists were less likely to be concerned about devaluing their self-estimates when they failed. Although beliefs about the consequences of failing did not enhance OOP predictions, it is possible that other beliefs (e.g., involving narcissism or hubris) may be relevant (see Hewitt, Flett, & Turnbull, 1992).

Some have argued that SOP is the basis for a normal or adaptive form of perfectionism because it involves having high personal standards and being conscientious (Enns & Cox, 2002; Hill, McIntire, &

Bacharach, 1997). Neumeister (2004) found that SOP was positively associated with appetitive achievement motivation at the level of both goals and motives (i.e., need for achievement – the approach-oriented achievement motive based on anticipatory pride upon succeeding; McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953). If an adaptive form of perfectionism exists, it should not correlate with aversive achievement motivation (e.g., FF). Although the main effects data support that logic, it is important to note that simultaneously elevated SOP and OOP contributed positively to beliefs that failure leads to shame and embarrassment (even after controlling for SPP). A belief that failure leads to shame and embarrassment is the core belief underlying achievement goal consequences of FF in previous research (Conroy et al., 2002, 2003). Thus, it appears that SOP by itself may not be dysfunctional for achievement goals once SPP has been controlled; however, simultaneously elevated SOP and OOP can be detrimental to achievement motivation even after SPP has been controlled.

Perfectionism appears to be largely independent of an individual's tendency to feel proud of her or his self or proud of her or his behaviors (Tangney, 2002). Recent research has explored need for achievement-related beliefs about the likelihood of feeling pride in yourself while engaged in personally-meaningful competence pursuits. Links between these beliefs and SOP should be investigated in future research to further connect the perfectionism and achievement motivation literatures that have emerged quite independently to date.

The biggest limitation of this study was that data were collected from a single source on a single occasion using self-report methods. This approach is vulnerable to a number of known biases (Schwarz & Sudman, 1996) so alternative methods (e.g., event-sampling; Reis & Gable, 2000) would be valuable complements assessing beliefs about the consequences of failing. Additionally, the present study only sampled beliefs in what seem to be the most commonly-identified aversive consequences of failing. It is possible that other failure-related beliefs are relevant. Finally, although perfectionism and FF are both conceptualized as general dispositions and instructions for the present study did not reflect any contextual-specificity, some recent evidence suggests that perfectionism scores may be somewhat context-dependent (Dunn, Gotwals, & Dunn, 2005). The extent to which these findings will generalize across contexts is unknown.

To summarize, the present study indicated that FF was more likely to motivate SPP than either of the other forms of perfectionism, and that SPP was particularly linked with beliefs about aversive interpersonal consequences of failing. These findings clarified relations between FF and perfectionism that may be useful in future research on achievement behavior. These findings also may provide some direction for cognitively-oriented therapists seeking to identify thoughts underlying problematic behaviors and feelings associated with perfectionism.

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