

Influence of Perfectionism and Achievement Goals on Student Academic Success

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## PERFECTION, GOAL ORIENTATION, AND STUDENT SUCCESS

### Abstract

Perfectionism in the classroom has garnered much attention in the past few decades. It is a trait that is much more complicated than simply desiring to be perfect at everything. Perfectionism comes in many dimensions, can be maladaptive and adaptive, and can therefore have a positive or negative relationship with academic achievement in students of all ages. Student academic success can also be influenced by achievement goals, of which there are four types: performance-approach, performance-avoidance, mastery-approach, and mastery-avoidance. The main purpose of this paper is to present how two dimensions of perfectionism (self-oriented and socially-prescribed) interact with achievement goals to impact student academic achievement. Interventions, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy, that school psychologists, teachers, and parents can use with younger students to mitigate the potential negative effects of perfectionistic behaviours will also be addressed. Simply believing that perfection is required at all times can be harmful to children, and if they know imperfection is okay and how to cope with differences between reality and expectations, then they will be well-equipped to handle any challenge in life.

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### Influence of Perfectionism and Achievement Goals on Student Academic Success

From the outside, it is easy to say that it is impossible to be perfect at everything, but for students who exhibit perfectionistic behaviour it is not so easy to let go of the need to be the best, because it is an important, strong component of their personality (Damian, Stoeber, Negru, & Băban, 2014). Over the past few decades, interest in perfectionism appears to have increased, particularly in school settings, because it is experienced by students internationally (Flett & Hewitt, 2014), and if trends in the Czech Republic are generalized, the negative effects of perfectionism appear to be growing (Portešová & Urbánek, 2013). Imagine that a student always has to control their group project because they think it would be terrible otherwise. Or they need to study for a test until 3 a.m. because they are not satisfied with their 4.0 grade point average. Or a student who believes their parents demand an A in every course or else there will be consequences. These are some of the thoughts and actions that students who place value on perfection might exhibit, and there are positives and negatives to each. Students need to learn how to recognize their maladaptive perfectionistic behaviours as well as the adaptive. High school students might feel the need to be high-achieving in order to be accepted to university or by their peers, but these students might not receive the message that imperfection is healthy, expected, and normal. Various types of perfectionism have been examined, as well as how they develop and what they mean for students. There is evidence that it can be both adaptive and maladaptive in regards to academic achievement (Ashby, Noble, & Gnilka, 2012, Damian et al., 2014; Flett & Hewitt, 2014; Neumeister, 2004; Verner-Filion & Gaudreau, 2010), hence it is vital that parents and educators recognize and attempt to mitigate the adverse effects. This trait is complex and has the potential to affect student academic success, therefore recognizing it is of

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utmost importance. The impact of perfectionism is imperative for understanding student achievement, as is the influence of the way in which students approach learning.

Academic achievement is also closely related to students' achievement goals (Damian et al., 2014; Dweck, 1986; Elliot, 1999; Elliot & Church, 1997). Goal theories suggest that there are four broad types of goals: performance, mastery, approach, and avoidance. Each is unique, with different positive and negative effects on students (Accordino et al., 2000; Damian et al., 2014; Dweck, 1986). For example, approach goals are often positively associated with academic achievement because there is an intrinsic motivation to build upon prior achievements (Verner-Filion, & Gaudreau, 2010). Conversely, students who work only to avoid failing a task entertain avoidance goals. Those who strive to be better than their peers are externally motivated to succeed, which is characteristic of performance goals. Mastery goals oppose performance goals in that they require striving to learn from mistakes and toward self-improvement (Dweck, 1986). As will be detailed in section two of this paper, the manifestations of achievement goals can impact academic achievement (Accordino et al., 2000; Elliot & Church, 1997).

There is a plethora of research on the relationships between perfectionism and achievement goal orientation. This review investigates how perfectionism affects students' academic achievement when paired with achievement goals. Both this relationship and a discussion about the practical implications for teachers, school psychologists, and parents, and ideas for future research will be presented.

### **Types and Causes of Perfectionism**

Perfectionism is not as straightforward as striving to be the best at something. It is a complex, multidimensional feature of a person's personality, and is widely believed to consist of three parts: self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially-prescribed (Damian et al., 2014; Hewitt &

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Flett, 1991; Kutlesa & Arthur, 2008). Some overlap appears to exist between the three (Stoeber et al., 2015), though that has not prevented researchers from investigating their unique influence on people (Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Stoeber, 2014; Verner-Filion & Gaudreau, 2010). General perfectionistic behaviour may include having impossibly high standards, thinking critically about one's abilities, being highly organized, and paying close attention to detail. These actions are often indicative of more adaptive perfectionism styles, such as self-oriented perfectionism (SOP). For this type of perfectionism, the unrealistic expectations are created by and for oneself, and are often viewed as adaptive because they may help students focus on the tasks at hand (Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Kottman & Ashby, 2000; Verner-Filion, & Vallerand, 2016). Students who have this type of perfectionism often do not remember where the behaviour came from – they see it as an innate trait of their personality (Damian et al., 2014; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Randall et al., 2015). SOP may also be viewed more positively than the other dimensions because it demonstrates a student's desire to improve and achieve to the best of their ability. On the other hand, it is not always an advantage to have SOP, because it is often characterized by having a rigid learning style (Flett & Hewitt, 2014) which allows little flexibility and so students are less able to adjust their behaviours when life intervenes. Thus, while SOP is usually viewed as a positive, adaptive form of perfectionism, the research is mixed, which could indicate that other forces may influence the outcome of perfectionistic behaviours.

The second dimension of perfectionism is known as other-oriented perfectionism (OOP) (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). As can be inferred from its name, this is when impractical expectations are placed on those closest to an individual, such as their parents, friends, or anyone else that plays a significant role in their life (Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Kottman & Ashby, 2000; Uz-Bas, 2011). Other-oriented perfectionists believe that when they fail it is because of the substandard

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performance of those around them (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Thus, people with OOP demand such high standards that they are less willing to help others reach their goals, and have more difficulty connecting with their peers (Stoeber, 2014). It is hard to say what exactly leads to the development of OOP, though it is known that these perfectionists are usually extrinsically motivated, so they feel rewarded when others are able to complete tasks to their high standard (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). It is also valuable to note that since this paper is focused on perfectionism in students, OOP will not be discussed as it pertains to how other people live up to one's expectations.

The final dimension of perfectionism proposed in Hewitt and Flett's (1991) model is socially-prescribed perfectionism (SPP). People who have SPP are constantly fixated on the expectations (real or unreal) that they believe other people have placed on them (Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Neumeister, 2004). This type of perfectionism can often cause students to feel anxious about letting people down, and some students may experience depression because their self-esteem can be extremely low (Neumeister, 2004). Furthermore, the sensitivity to mistakes these students often report feeling can be a manifestation of maladaptive perfectionism (Kottman & Ashby, 2000), which as the name suggests, does not lend itself to productive, positive behaviour. SPP can also be maladaptive in that students do not actually focus on classroom material, they simply perform in hopes of pleasing other people (Verner-Filion & Gaudreau, 2010; Verner-Filion & Vallerand, 2016). The positive and negative effects towards academic success will be further discussed later in the review. It is also valuable to note the ways in which parents can contribute to perfectionistic behaviour in their children.

Parents play an integral role in the life of their child, and research has shown that perfectionism can be developed by observing parental actions and attitudes (Neumeister, 2004;

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Randall et al., 2015). Specifically, gifted university students who have SOP are known to attribute at least a portion of their perfectionism toward their parents' behaviours (Randall et al., 2015). For instance, a child with SOP might perceive a parent as always being organized, on time, and expecting a lot from those around them. Consequently, the child learns the same behaviours simply because they are characteristic of the environment in which they are raised. The perception of parental behaviour is also important for adaptive perfectionism in general (Madjar, Voltsis, & Weinstock, 2015). Thus, students feel like their parents can support and help them improve when mistakes do occur. Interestingly, students also develop high standards of their own (Madjar et al., 2015), possibly because they know there is support if they fail to reach their goals. This allows students to strive for their best while simultaneously adopting positive emotional responses to difficulty in school and developing adaptive perfectionistic actions. The learning of the perfectionistic behaviour by children shows the significant role that a parent's behaviour can play in the development of this trait.

Another intriguing way the parents can contribute to perfectionism in their children is via the parenting style used (Hibbard & Walton, 2014; Neumeister, 2004). It has been shown that parents who are controlling and make perfection a condition of love for their children, are more likely to be perceived as a perfectionist by their children, who have learned to exhibit similar behaviour. These parents often reflect the authoritarian parenting style (Neumeister, 2004), and because their children may report developing SOP throughout their lives, they do not see it as an innate personality characteristic (Damian et al., 2014; Hewitt & Flett, 1991). As well, those students who are deemed gifted in elementary school reportedly feel less positive emotions towards their parents, and towards their own academic success (Neumeister, 2004). Perhaps this

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is because they believe their parents are unforgiving of mistakes, and so they, as children, are influenced by the authoritarian parenting they experience.

Perfectionism, regardless of dimension, has many manifestations that can be individual in nature. For example, students may refuse to submit assignments, or strive to please the adults in their lives. Similarly, this individuality is clearly displayed in how students believe their perfectionistic behaviours develop: some say it is innate, while others attribute it to parental influences on their environment (Damian et al., 2014; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Hibbard & Walton, 2014; Neumeister, 2004; Randall et al., 2015). Although it is largely viewed as positive, certain aspects of perfectionism (e.g., the strict studying behaviours of SOP and the general inability to effectively cope with academic challenges) are more maladaptive for students. The maladaptive and adaptive components of trait perfectionism where academic achievement is concerned, along with the impact of achievement goals, will be discussed in the third section of this review.

### **Achievement Goals**

Throughout the past 30 years, there have been numerous theories that have attempted to explain what types of orientations students have towards their work (Damian et al., 2014). The research conducted by Dweck (1986) was one of the first to do so by outlining a dichotomous view of goal orientation. In this framework, there are two ways in which people tackle their goals. The first is the performance orientation in which students complete tasks in an effort to be superior to their classmates. They see no room for error otherwise somebody else will be at the top. The goal is to outperform others, regardless of how much learning is done (Damian et al., 2014; Dweck, 1986). The second is mastery whereby students view the task, or goal, as a source of self-improvement, and take the opportunity to learn from their mistakes because they desire to completely understand the topic and develop their skills in the area (Dweck, 1986). Mastery

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goals are often viewed as more adaptive for learning than performance goals because students aim for increasing comprehension and ability instead of outranking their peers (Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer, Carter, & Elliot, 2000). The difference between performance and mastery goal orientation is an important distinction to make to better comprehend student achievement.

Furthermore, the notion that students academically perform to either approach success or avoid failure was developed (Elliot, 1999; Elliot & Church, 1997). Thus, by having approach goals, students are actively working to achieve their goals to improve upon their prior successes and continue being the best. Moreover, students with these goals can have higher academic success (e.g., better results on an exam) than students with other types of achievement goals (Verner-Filion & Gaudreau, 2010). Conversely, Elliot & Church (1997) also proposed that students who exhibit avoidance behaviours are concerned with not failing at the goal and with not losing the abilities they possess. These students are externally motivated to succeed, and they want to be recognized by others for their achievement of not failing.

This approach-avoidance dichotomy can be paired with performance goals, such that the orientations of performance-approach and performance-avoidance exist (Senko & Freund, 2015). In this model, students with performance goal orientations yearn to be the best, regardless of if they want to achieve the goal to prevent losing their ability (performance-avoidance) or to maintain their place at the top of the class (performance-approach). Thus, there is support for a 2x2 theory of achievement goal orientation (Elliot & Church, 1997) with the development of performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals.

Traditionally, mastery goals have not been divided based on avoidance and approach dimensions, however new research has shown that it is possible to have these two facets of mastery as well (Damian et al., 2014; Verner-Filion & Gaudreau, 2010). This means that there is

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further support for the 2x2 theory of achievement goals (Damian et al., 2014; Elliot & Church, 1997). In this more detailed framework, students with a mastery-approach goal orientation aim to both not fail their task and to be the best at it. An example would be a student who wants to memorize digits of Pi: they want to learn it to develop their recall skills and to show others that they were the most successful. Thus, the student approaches learning with the intent of showing how much their ability has developed by mastering their task. The final type of goal orientation proposed by this model is mastery-avoidance (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). These students approach learning a task with the idea that they will become the best at something so as not to fail at it (Elliot & Church, 1997); however, young people completing mastery-avoidance goals may not put as much time into their work (Senko & Freund, 2015). Hence, once students have the mindset of needing to improve on their prior results, they find it harder to reach that goal and consequently give up. However, other research suggests that mastery goals are more beneficial than performance goals because they focus on improving ability rather than proving to others that one can do the task (Verner-Filion & Gaudreau, 2010). Thus, students with the mastery-approach goal orientation may be just as likely to succeed as any other student. Mastery goals appear to be neither helpful nor a hindrance, but dividing it into mastery-approach and mastery-avoidance is worth doing because the desire to learn and master something seems to not always translate to developing high academic achievement. Students may exhibit similar behaviours across the goal orientations (e.g., studying to get high marks in school) because there appears to be statistical overlap between the four achievement goals but each appears to have a unique impact on student academic success (Damian et al., 2014; Hanchon, 2010; Stoeber et al., 2015).

Achievement goals influence student academic results, in that they are related to a variety of performance enhancing and inhibiting behaviours, no matter what age the student is. As

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described, the influences of achievement orientation on academic success are worth noting because they provide useful information regarding how students view the learning process. Similarly, information gleaned from knowing a student's perfectionism type helps explain student success. Depending on the student's reason for wanting to be high-achieving, it should hold that when achievement goals are coupled with perfectionism, there will be a pronounced effect on academic achievement for students. Research has shown that the combined influence of perfectionism and achievement goals on academic success appears to depend on the dimension of perfectionism and the specific achievement goal a student possesses (Accordino et al, 2000; Damian et al., 2014; Hanchon, 2010; Uz-Bas, 2011; Verner-Filion & Gaudreau, 2010; Verner-Filion, & Vallerand, 2016). In other words, perfectionism type and achievement orientation each have unique effects on academics; therefore, combining them may provide a more comprehensive understanding of what affects student academic achievement.

### **Perfectionism, Goal Orientation, and Academic Success**

Perfectionism has been studied in a multitude of different student samples, ranging from gifted and non-gifted university students, all the way down to the primary-school learner. Typically, perfectionism is thought of as a quality that can only help students succeed because of its connotation of striving for excellence and being conscientious learners. However, recent research shows that it is not always a positive trait to have (Ashby et al., 2012; Bieling et al., 2003; Hanchon, 2010; Madjar et al., 2015), and that there are mediators, such as achievement goal orientation (Stoeber et al., 2015; Verner-Filion & Gaudreau, 2010) that may account for the conflicting research results.

Students with adaptive perfectionism typically experience more academic success, which may be explained by the type of achievement goal they possess. Adaptive perfectionism in

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school-aged children is related to being more organized, and focusing less attention on mistakes, and so they are likely to see an improvement in grades (Accordino et al., 2000; Uz-Bas, 2011).

As university students, they plan to study more in order to be prepared for in-class assessments, and in turn report feeling like they did their best on exams (Bieling et al., 2013). Thus, they approach their learning with a sense of bettering themselves, are more focused on mastering the material, and want to do better than their peers (Accordino et al., 2000; Hanchon, 2010).

Adaptive perfectionism is related to both performance and mastery goals (Damian et al., 2014; Vernier-Filion & Gaudreau, 2010), and so these students also report higher academic success, which indicates that the behaviours rooted in positive achievement goals and perfectionism can help students develop beneficial behaviours that can help them succeed. Adaptive perfectionism also protects against negative emotional reactions to discrepancies between expected and actual results (Accordino et al., 2000; Bieling et al., 2003). Therefore, when students do not achieve their goals, they are more likely to portray positive affect, and they will be more motivated to maintain high academic achievement if they are adaptive perfectionists with such a positive approach to learning.

Moreover, when students have adaptive forms of perfectionism, they are likely to be driven to work hard to achieve their goal of perfection. One of the more positive perfectionism dimensions is SOP because it appears that these students are intrinsically motivated to be the best they can be (Accordino et al., 2000; Ashby et al., 2012; Kottman & Ashby, 2000; Neumeister, 2004). These students are responsible because they submit high quality work on time, and understand topics very well because of their desire to improve their knowledge. Therefore, being a student with high academic standards for oneself, an aspect of SOP, has been positively correlated with higher grades and a strong work ethic (Accordino et al., 2000). This is supported

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by the finding that being organized, orderly, and having a good eye for detail, also facets of adaptive perfectionism, predict higher academic success (Uz-Bas, 2011). Furthermore, SOP can be beneficial to students who have positive affect, which leads them to be more confident in their work (Verner-Filion & Vallerand, 2016), and about the evaluations they have completed (Bieling et al., 2003). Thus, they feel well-prepared for tests, and cope well when there is a difference between their expectations and results (Bieling et al., 2003). Building on this, it is plausible that having more confidence in the ability to achieve the goal may lead students with SOP to approach their tasks as opposed to avoid them. The likelihood of success in school is significantly increased for SOP students who have performance-approach goals (Damian et al., 2014; Stoeber et al., 2015; Verner-Filion & Gaudreau, 2010), which is a clear indication that these two factors play a role in academic achievement. All in all, combining performance-approach goals with having high standards for oneself and SOP can be highly beneficial to students' academic achievement.

The relationship between SOP and classroom success can also be mediated by other achievement goals. For example, students with SOP have also been found to be high in avoidance goals in recent studies (Stoeber et al., 2015; Verner-Filion & Gaudreau, 2010). This is surprising because doing work with the intention of not failing is not seen as the most positive way to approach learning, though Flett and Hewitt (1991) found that SOP students were more likely to be motivated to avoid failure than to approach learning. While it may appear counterintuitive that SOP is positively related to both avoidance and approach goals, it is valuable to know that perfectionism, even just one dimension of it, can simultaneously be a benefit and a hindrance to student academic achievement.

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The students who perceive expectations also experience an effect on their academics when paired with achievement goals. The correlations between SPP and academic achievement are largely impacted by parental or educator expectations (Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Madjar et al., 2015; Neumeister, 2004). However, SPP is directly related to an increase in both types of performance goals and a decrease in mastery-approach goals (Verner-Filion & Gaudreau, 2010). More specifically, students who are high in SPP are more likely to strive towards completing their work (Damian et al., 2014), hence maintaining their status in class as a high-achiever, yet they are just as likely to exhibit the striving behaviour because they did not want to fail or have their classmates think they are less intelligent. Thus, the students who have these cognitions can be distracted from the task at hand because they are obsessed with pleasing others by living up to the perceived expectations (Neumeister, 2004; Verner-Filion & Gaudreau, 2010). While there are clear advantages to having SPP, it is valuable to know that academic success is not always positive when achievement goals are considered.

Maladaptive perfectionism and achievement goals are not so easily related to an increase or decrease in academic success. There are many behaviours that some students with maladaptive perfectionism have that often sabotage their academic achievement, including the refusal to submit a project for fear of not getting the highest grade (Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Neumeister, 2004; Uz-Bas, 2011). It is clear to see how a fear of failure would affect a student's grade: they would rather get a zero for a project they think they did inadequately than get any mark at all. The negative emotional responses to discrepancies (e.g., being critical of mistakes) can be related to maladaptive perfectionism (Bieling et al., 2003), or this behaviour could stem from SOP or SPP (Damian et al., 2014), which means it could be associated with either of the four achievement goal orientations (Damian et al., 2014; Verner-Filion & Gaudreau, 2010).

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Moreover, though it can be positively correlated with performance goals, maladaptive perfectionism outweighs the benefits of the achievement goals, and students continue to have lower academic success than their adaptive perfectionist counterparts (Hanchon, 2010). Being self-critical is a component of SOP, and it is positively correlated as well with anxiety, so it is less adaptive (Uz-Bas, 2011), and more likely to lead to academic struggles. As well, the need to appear perfect can prevent students from reaching out for help, so perhaps they may adopt an avoidance goal orientation. If they are afraid to ask for help, they might be able to do the bare minimum to keep up appearances, which is not the most beneficial behaviour to have. The negative associations with asking for help affect students, no matter if they need it to finish a question or to gain more control of their thoughts and actions. As it is evident, the critical line connecting perfectionism, achievement goals, and academic achievement is not straight, but is rather twisted, and is well-deserving of the attention it has been receiving over the past 30 years.

### **Mitigating Perfectionism: School System and Parents**

Considering all the information discussed, schools, through their teachers and guidance counselors, need to support their students with perfectionistic behaviours. Students of any age, from primary to post-secondary can have perfectionism (Flett, & Hewitt, 2014; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Kottman & Ashby, 2000; Randall et al., 2015; Uz-Bas, 2011). Therefore, it is important to recognize its maladaptive manifestations in young students so that they can learn to cope with unexpected academic discrepancies when they arise, and what better place to learn how to do that than in the school system.

One such way that students with maladaptive perfectionism can be helped is through cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) whereby they learn how to take the maladaptive aspects of perfectionism and turn them into helpful behaviours (Fairweather-Schmidt & Wade, 2015;

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Kutlesa & Arthur, 2008; LaSota, Ross, & Kearney, 2017). CBT has been used with success in this area. For example, university students who participated in group therapy learned that their work ethic was just as important as the outcome and consequently experienced a decrease in perfectionistic behaviours and thoughts that hindered them after eight weeks of treatment (Kutlesa & Arthur, 2008). This specific usage of CBT shows the reader that there are established methods in which perfectionism can be shifted from having a negative effect on academics to being a positive, helpful catalyst for academic success. Every student should learn how to set attainable and flexible goals, and understand what motivates them to do their best, as they did in the Kutlesa and Arthur (2008) intervention. Learning the benefits associated with goal setting and motivation would be useful for high school students who have perfectionism as well because they have developed the mental processes to understand their thoughts and behaviours.

This method of helping university students could be tailored to even younger students because having flexible goals is important for students of all ages, and perfectionism develops early (Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Neumeister, 2004; Randall et al., 2015). Take, for instance, an eleven-year old student who expects to be the best in class and strives towards that result. They may benefit from an in-class CBT, taught by their teacher and a clinical psychologist (Fairweather-Schmidt & Wade, 2015). If that student is first taught about perfectionism and how it affects life, and are then given a second lesson the following week focusing on coping skills to mitigate self-criticizing and encourage revelling in achievements, the frequency of negative SOP-striving will decrease (Fairweather-Schmidt & Wade, 2015). In other words, it is effective to teach students that imperfection is acceptable and how to prevent emotional distress when there is a discrepancy between the expected and actual outcome on an evaluation. Being educated on perfectionism in the formative pre-adolescent years can lead to a decrease in

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emotional problems (such as depression), in hyperactivity in class, and diminish the negative effects of SOP-striving behaviours, even at a four-week follow-up (Fairweather-Schmidt & Wade, 2015). Inferring from this, the potential for long-lasting benefits exists. If students are taught this information at a younger age, they will have the ability to use it for the rest of their lives and therefore reduce the negative effects of their perfectionistic thoughts and actions. It is important for teachers to understand that they can help their students learn not just classroom material but also life skills, and when these are taught in the classroom, everyone's lives improve.

Furthermore, some students with perfectionism may be reluctant to seek help when they struggle (Flett & Hewitt, 2014; Zeifman et al., 2015), while others are not (Shim, Rubenstein, & Drapeau, 2016). Help can be as simple asking a teacher to explain a concept again, or seeking professional help to get control of their maladaptive perfectionism; either way, those who are reluctant may want to keep up the façade of being perfect, and any action that contradicts that image is a sign of weakness (Zeifman et al., 2015). This mirrors how some people who experience mental health issues do not speak up out of fear of judgment or appearing weak. The opposite can be true: taking the steps to get assistance when it is needed is a sign of strength, independence, and maturity that society should value. Some of the perfectionistic students who do ask for help simply do so in order to finish their work, and not to get a deeper understanding of the course material (Shim et al., 2016), while others are likely to do so because they have an understanding of what mental illness can look like (Zeifman et al., 2015). Those students who do seek necessary help should not feel weak because they are taking control of their lives, and teachers should encourage them to do so.

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What can parents do to help their perfection-desiring children? One answer is to be aware of their parenting techniques and their behaviour. As mentioned previously, parenting is related to children developing perfectionism (Hibbard & Walton, 2014; Madjar et al. 2015; Neumeister, 2004; Randall et al., 2015); therefore, it is important for parents to know that success should never be a condition of love or support. Children who experience unconditional love have a strong belief that their perfectionism is innate, is a characteristic of who they are, and are driven to approach their goals (Neumeister, 2004; Randall et al, 2015). Supporting children will not eliminate their perfectionistic behaviours, but it will allow them to realize that they are worthy even when they make mistakes. As well, since children model the behaviour that they see, they can internalize the expectations that they perceive, thereby expecting perfection from themselves and others because it was part of the environment in which they were raised (Madjar et al., 2015; Neumeister, 2004). Therefore, if parents show an acceptance of imperfection and relay to their children that their best is good enough (i.e., they do not have to be perfect), then the child will be less critical of their mistakes, and better able to cope when they struggle in school.

### **Future Considerations**

It is difficult to make comparisons between the present selection of articles available on this topic because there is no one, single way to operationalize perfectionism, though some have tried (such as Hewitt & Flett, 1991). While there are agreements as to what behaviours are characteristic of perfectionism (e.g., having high standards, being overly critical, unable to cope with discrepancy, and feeling pressure from society), more streamlining of a definition is needed so it can be better understood and thus less subjective to the reader. As well, more research is warranted for the effectiveness of intervention programmes in young, school-aged children. This would be valuable to know so that more longitudinal, and potentially causal, research can be

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conducted. Furthermore, research in perfectionism should examine to what extent students learn these behaviours in school. If perfectionism is expected by teachers, and peers, then SPP may lead to more positive social outcomes which this review was unable to find.

### **Conclusion**

The ways in which perfectionism appear to impact a student's academic achievement are astounding, especially when achievement goals are brought into the equation. Students with adaptive perfectionism are more likely to be organized, more positive in class, and be better behaved (Fairweather-Schmidt & Wade, 2015; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Uz-Bas, 2011); whereas students with maladaptive perfectionism are likely to experience emotional distress with challenges (Accordino et al., 2003). Pairing achievement goals and perfectionism has revealed insightful information about how student academic achievement is influenced.

This review also presented two theories of goal orientation, leading to a discussion on performance, mastery, approach, and avoidance implications for students. In summary, Dweck (1986) was one of the first researchers to suggest there were different achievement goals, and she developed the concepts of performance and mastery goals. With the development of approach and avoidance, the 2x2 theory was developed (Elliot, 1999; Elliot & Church, 1997). This research provides an understanding of how students tackle their goals, which is important for students, parents, and schools alike.

Studying multi-faceted perfectionism in the last three decades has allowed for greater comprehension of what influences self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially-prescribed perfectionism. Such influences include parental behaviours, perceived expectations, and personality (Damian et al., 2014; Flett & Hewitt, 2014; Madjar et al., 2015; Neumeister, 2004; Stoeber, 2014). Doing this research has broadened the scope as to what can be done to ensure

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perfectionism is not a detriment, but an advantage to the next generation of learners. By employing CBT techniques to explain the impacts of perfectionism (Fairweather-Schmidt, 2015; Kottman & Ashby, 2000) younger children will be able to approach learning for the sake of learning, not because they must be the top of the class. Being perfect is impractical, for if everyone was perfect all the time, it would be impossible to learn from mistakes and improve ourselves.

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