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# How does perfectionism influence anxiety in gifted middle school students?

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How Does Perfectionism Influence Anxiety in Gifted Middle School Students?

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Education Specialist

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## Abstract

Research has demonstrated that gifted students tend to experience a higher level of perfectionism when compared to their regular education peers. While perfectionism may aid these students in their academics, it can also contribute to negative consequences in terms of the social and emotional needs of these students, such as anxiety. This research study sought to add to the literature by examining whether perfectionism does influence anxiety in gifted middle school students. Twenty-two middle school students enrolled in a center-based gifted program participated in this study by completing two measures: one examining levels of perfectionism and another examining levels of anxiety. Data was analyzed using Pearson correlations and correlated t-tests. The results demonstrated that students with higher levels of perfectionism had higher levels of anxiety as well. The gifted students did not experience one type of perfectionism more than the other, but students who had higher levels of socially prescribed perfectionism did experience higher levels of anxiety. This study also demonstrated that there was not a relationship between perfectionism or anxiety with academic achievement. Implications of this study and recommendations for further research are included.

## How Does Perfectionism Influence Anxiety in Gifted Middle School Students?

### **Introduction**

Students who are academically gifted make up about six to ten percent of the total student population in the United States. Although they do not make up a significant portion of the students in this country, this percentage roughly equates to three to five million students (National Association of Gifted Children, 2015). The definition of a gifted student in Virginia notes students who “demonstrate high levels of accomplishment or who show the potential for higher levels of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment” (Virginia Department of Education, 2012). These students tend to be high achieving and successful in their academics. Previous research has shown that students who are gifted may tend to have perfectionistic characteristics. While perfectionism may aid these students in their academics, it can also contribute to negative consequences in terms of the social and emotional needs of these students, such as anxiety.

Unfortunately, there has not been a substantial amount of research examining the link between perfectionism and anxiety in gifted students. Being that there is not a lot of information available, it is important for school psychologists to be more aware of this relationship and the impact it is having on gifted students. If students in the gifted population tend to be perfectionists and this trait can contribute to anxiety, it is important to understand the relationship so that support can be put into place for these students in their schools. The needs of gifted students are often overlooked in the schools because these students generally are academically successful. When attending to students and

providing services, school systems often look for educational impact. However, these students tend to excel in academics so they do not always receive the mental health services that they may need. Although academic impact may not always be a concern, if gifted students are experiencing a significant amount of anxiety, it can negatively impact their overall school experience. This anxiety can often lead to things such as school avoidance, which is a major concern. It is important for school psychologists to be aware if perfectionism does influence anxiety in gifted students so that they may help these students' daily functioning in school.

### ***Perfectionism***

Perfectionism is a concept that has often been difficult for researchers to define. In basic terms, perfectionism is seen as a mode of functioning that relates to a tendency to strive to be or appear to be perfect in most aspects of one's life (Guignard, Jacquet & Lubart, 2013). In the recent years, researchers have begun to view perfectionism as a multidimensional trait of personality. This trait can be related to psychological difficulties, distortions of interpersonal relations, and an inaccurate relationship to success. This model describes perfectionism as a three dimensional construct that includes self-oriented, other-oriented, and social-prescribed perfectionism. Self-oriented perfectionism involves one's tendency to create high or unreachable personal standards, while severely evaluating one's own behavior. Other-oriented perfectionism is related to the beliefs and expectations in regards to the capabilities of others. This tends to involve having unrealistic beliefs for others, evaluating other's performance, and expecting others to be perfect. Social-prescribed perfectionism includes the perceived need to meet the standards and expectations prescribed by others. This dimension of perfectionism

involves the person believing that others have unrealistic standards in regards to their performance, evaluate them in a harsh manner, and apply pressure on them to be perfect (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Perfectionism has also been viewed as a personality characteristic that can be categorized as healthy or neurotic. A healthy perfectionist can be described as someone who is able to create objectives that are realistic and be satisfied when they reach these objectives. A person who is a neurotic perfectionist tends to have excessively high standards of achievement, which tend to be unreachable. This has a tendency to lead to feelings that their goals are incomplete or not perfect (Guignard, Jacquet & Lubart, 2013). It is important to distinguish between healthy and neurotic perfectionism in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of perfectionism and its implications. Numerous early theorists argued that some aspects of perfectionism may actually be adaptive and aid people in achievement, due to the idea that it fosters excellence and helps them to strive to meet goals (Bieling, Israeli, & Antony, 2004). For example, research has demonstrated that both self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism have been associated with achievement in mathematics (Stornelli, Flett, & Hewitt, 2009). Based on this research, it appears that perfectionism can potentially aid students in their academic achievement as well.

### ***Perfectionism and Gifted Students***

In recent years, there has also been research conducted in order to examine the personality trait of perfectionism in populations of gifted students. Being that gifted students are high achieving, it is easy to see how they may have aspects of perfectionism that cause them to create high standards and strive for excellence, especially academically. A research study was conducted in order to assess the relationship between

gifted students and the personality trait of perfectionism. In order to accomplish this, the researchers examined a group of high school students who were either in gifted and talented programs or from honor societies or honor programs. The results demonstrated that the gifted students had a tendency to score higher on the Perfectionism Quiz, suggesting that the gifted students may have more traits of perfectionism than the general population (Orange, 1997).

Another study examined the types of perfectionism in a sample of students and where gifted students fit in these profiles. In order to accomplish this, the researchers examined students from years six, eight, and eleven, using the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale. The researchers found that gifted students scored higher than non-gifted students in terms of perfectionism on all dimensions (Kornblum & Ainley, 2005). These results once again support the idea that gifted students experience higher levels of perfectionism compared to students from the general education population. Schuler (2000) also attempted to examine the relationship between perfectionism and gifted adolescents in a rural middle school by administering the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale. The results of this study indicated that 87.5% were found to have perfectionistic tendencies, which supports the idea that perfectionism can be found in many students in the gifted population. LoCicero and Ashby sought to investigate levels of multidimensional perfectionism in gifted middle school students. These gifted students were then compared to their same age peers in the general cohort. The results of this study showed that gifted students did have higher levels of perfectionism when compared to the general cohort. (LoCicero & Ashby, 2000). Based on the research reviewed, it appears that there is a significant link between perfectionism and gifted students,

suggesting that gifted students may experience higher levels of perfectionism when compared to their general education peers.

### ***When Perfectionism Goes Wrong in Gifted Students***

The socio-emotional needs of perfectionists have been examined on multiple occasions and the results demonstrate that perfectionists often experience negative consequences due to this personality trait. Students who have perfectionistic tendencies tend to be accustomed to success and this contributes to an immense fear of failure. Perfectionists are driven to be flawless so that they can avoid this perceived failure at all costs. This fear of failure can have a negative impact on the perfectionists. When a perfectionist is afraid to fail, this can cause them to procrastinate, avoid new experiences, or even turn into workaholics. Perfectionists also tend to impose a great amount of pressure on themselves, which can lead to a great deal of stress for the students. While perfectionism is a pursuit of excellence, these students often take this to an extreme. This may lead to students feeling dissatisfied and unfulfilled (Hess, 1994).

As we have learned from the research, many students who are recognized as gifted by their school systems also have a tendency to have perfectionist tendencies. Therefore, it is important to address both the social and emotional needs of these students. It is true that a large number of gifted students are socially and emotionally competent. This can lead to many believing that gifted students are well adjusted and do not struggle socially nor emotionally (Coleman, 1996). Therefore, the needs of these students are often over looked by educators. Many gifted students tend to have impossible standards for their academic achievement, along with intense reactions to academic failure. Their perfectionism can be associated with a rigid adherence to these

high standards, while also putting an irrational importance on meeting these standards (Fletcher & Neumeister, 2012). Some of the common characteristics of perfectionistic gifted students include isolating themselves, highly critical of themselves and others, controlling, sensitive, chronic worrier, poor time-management skills, need for constant reassurance, judgmental, and a feeling that enough is never enough (Callard-Szulgit, 2012). All of these characteristics can impact these students negatively in their social interactions, academic performance, and emotional well-being.

### *Perfectionism and Anxiety*

Perfectionism is a personality facet that may be useful in terms of high levels of accomplishment. However, because of this, it can also be associated with feelings of anxiety when those standards of accomplishment are not met. Anxiety is characterized by a state of mental uneasiness and excessive worry that can cause both physical and psychological discomfort. It can impact a person in many ways, such as lowering their concentration and disrupting their behaviors. Anxiety can be categorized in trait and state anxiety. Trait anxiety is seen as general level of stress that is a characteristic of a person. An individual who has a high level of trait anxiety can become easily stressed and anxious. On the other hand, state anxiety is described as a state of heightened emotions that are a response to a particular situation (NSW Department of Education and Communities, & Charles Sturt University, 2014). Flett, Greene, and Hewitt (2004) were interested in exploring the relationship between the dimensions of perfectionism and anxiety sensitivity in a sample of undergraduate college students. In their study, these researchers examined perfectionism not only in terms of the dimensions of the trait, but also in terms of perfectionistic thoughts and self-presentation. The results of this study

demonstrated that perfectionism and anxiety sensitivity appear to be closely linked (Flett, Greene, & Hewitt, 2004). Another study also chose to examine whether there was a relationship between perfectionism and subclinical levels of anxiety using undergraduate students. The researchers found evidence to support a correlation between perfectionism and social anxiety. They also found correlations between perfectionism and agoraphobic fears, death anxiety, illness and injury-related fears, and fears of sexual and aggressive scenes. This suggests that there is a relationship between perfectionism and many forms of anxiety (Saboonchi & Lundh, 1997).

Gnilka, Ashby, and Noble (2012) conducted a study that aimed to examine the relationship between adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism and anxiety in a sample of undergraduate students. Through their research study, they found that individuals with adaptive perfectionism, maladaptive perfectionism, and non-perfectionism were significantly different. The participants who had maladaptive perfectionism had the highest levels of anxiety. This supports previous findings that maladaptive perfectionism tends to be associated with higher levels of psychological distress. The participants who had adaptive perfectionism were found to have lower levels of anxiety when compared to both the maladaptive perfectionist group and the non-perfectionist group. This suggests that adaptive perfectionism may be associated with more positive outcomes and act as a buffer against psychological distress (Gnilka, Ashby, & Noble, 2012). Numerous research studies have been conducted that have found evidence to support the idea that there is a link between perfectionism and anxiety.

### ***Perfectionism, Gifted Students, and Anxiety***

Previous research has found results that support the idea that there is a link between perfectionism and anxiety. It also appears that gifted students often experience higher levels of perfectionism than their same age, general education peers. If we see more perfectionism in gifted populations of students, then it is possible that these students may also be experiencing higher levels of anxiety. The resulting anxiety can cause significant difficulties, not only in their personal lives, but in their academic life as well. Therefore, it is important to examine the relationship between perfectionism and anxiety to better understand these gifted students and their mental health needs. There have been a limited number of studies that have examined the relationship between perfectionism and anxiety in students who are gifted. However, some researchers have sought to look closely at these traits in the gifted population.

Researchers generated a study that proposed to explore the relationship between perfectionism orientation of gifted children with the affective areas of depression and anxiety. In order to examine this relationship, the researchers studied a sample of children between the ages of seven and fourteen years. The findings in this study demonstrated that there was a negative correlation between anxiety and perfectionism in this gifted population. Therefore, this suggests that gifted students who exhibit perfectionistic tendencies may not have higher levels of anxiety as well. However, it is important to note that this study was conducted during the months of summer, which may have explained the lower levels of anxiety in this population (Christopher & Shewmaker, 2010). The results of this study do not support the idea that there is a relationship between perfectionism and anxiety in gifted students. However, other research has found contradictory evidence.

Guignard, Jacquet, and Lubart (2012) also attempted to study the relationship between perfectionism and anxiety in intellectually gifted students. These researchers examined gifted sixth graders, and non-gifted fifth and sixth graders in order to assess whether there appeared to be a link between perfectionistic tendencies and higher levels of anxiety. The researchers' findings in this study express a link between perfectionism and manifest anxiety. This suggests that there may be an anxiety-producing effect of perfectionism. The study also found that the intellectually gifted children had higher scores of perfectionism but the same level of anxiety when compared to the non-gifted group of sixth graders. However, the intellectually gifted children had the same level of perfectionism but higher anxiety when compared to the non-gifted fifth graders. This suggests that perfectionism may be more sensitive to developmental changes rather than changes in school (Guignard, Jacquet, & Lubart, 2012).

There appears to be contradictory evidence when examining the relationship between perfectionistic tendencies and anxiety in intellectually gifted students. The issue at hand is that there has not been a sufficient amount of research conducted that investigates the roles of these factors in gifted students. It is crucial that school psychologists and other mental health professionals in school systems are aware of the needs of their gifted students so that they may provide support when needed.

### ***Hypotheses and Research Questions***

#### ***Hypothesis***

*Hypothesis 1:* Based on the prior research, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant, positive correlation between measures of anxiety and overall

perfectionism. That is to say that students with higher levels of overall perfectionism will be more likely to experience higher levels of total anxiety as well.

### *Research Questions*

*Research Question 1:* This research study examined the differences between self-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism. The researcher attempted to answer whether gifted students have higher levels of self-oriented perfectionism or socially prescribed perfectionism.

*Research Question 2:* The second research question this study will address involves examining if there is a stronger correlation between self-oriented perfectionism and anxiety, or socially prescribed perfectionism and anxiety.

*Research Question 3:* The third research question this study examined was if perfectionism impacts school achievement.

*Research Question 4:* The fourth research question this study examined was if anxiety impacts school achievement.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The data (N=22) were collected over the course of the 2014-2015 school year from three classrooms. Participants for this research study were middle school students enrolled in a center-based gifted program from a middle school in a city in Central Virginia. In order to be found gifted by this school system, the students' grades, teacher rating scales, and test scores were considered. Admission to the middle school center-based gifted program had the following criteria: 97-99 percentile in aptitude, 97-99 percentile in achievement, and a GPA of at least a 3.6. The students in this program also

must maintain a 2.0 GPA. All participants were between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Participants were nine sixth graders, eight seventh graders, and five eighth graders. There were twelve female and ten male participants. Demographic information for the participants is summarized in Table 1 and Table 2.

**Table 1**  
**Demographics of Entire Study Sample**

	Number	Percent
Female	12	54.5
Male	10	45.5
Total	22	100.0

	Number	Percent
6 <sup>th</sup>	9	40.9
7 <sup>th</sup>	8	36.4
8 <sup>th</sup>	5	22.7
Total	22	100.0

### *Measures*

#### *Children and Adolescent Perfectionism Scale (CAPS)*

The Children and Adolescent Perfectionism Scale (CAPS) (Flett, Hewitt, Boucher, Davidson, & Munro, 2000) is a self-report instrument that is designed to provide a global score of perfectionism. It also provides a score for two of its dimensions: self-oriented perfectionism (SOP) and socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP).

Participants rate the items on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 being “False—Not at all true of me” to 5 being “Very True of Me”. Higher scores reflect greater perfectionism.

The measure takes 10-15 minutes to complete. It has been found to have an adequate level of reliability.

#### *Revised Children’s Manifest Anxiety Scale-Second Edition (RCMAS-2)*

The Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale-Second Edition (RCMAS-2) (Reynolds & Richmond, 2008) is a forty-nine item self-report measure that is used to assess anxiety in children and adolescents from six to nineteen years old. The child or adolescent responds "Yes" or "No" to the given items. The measure takes 10-15 minutes to complete. The R-CMAS provides a Total Anxiety score. It also provides scores for two validity scales: Inconsistent Responding Index and Defensiveness (used to detect the tendency to consent, social desirability, and falsification); and four subscales: Physiological Activity (somatic manifestations of anxiety), Worry/Oversensitivity (obsessional concerns that are not clearly defined and also occur with fears of being affectively wounded or isolated), and Social Concerns/Concentration (school difficulties, uncomfortable social or interpersonal thoughts, difficulties with attention or concentration). This scale has demonstrated adequate reliability and validity.

#### *Grade Point Average (GPA)*

The participants' GPAs were calculated by obtaining their grades for their first semester of the 2014-2015 school year. The GPAs only consisted of their grades from their core academic subjects. In order to calculate the GPAs, the letter grades were given points according to a standard scale (A=4 points, B=3 points, C=2 points, D=1 point, and F=0 points). The average of the grade points was then calculated to obtain the semester GPAs.

#### *Procedure*

Data was collected during the spring of the 2014-2015 school year. A parent consent form was sent home with each student from selected sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classes to allow for permission to participate in the research study. Those that

returned parent consent forms were asked to complete the various scales. All of participants (N=22) were pulled at one time from non-academic classes to the school library for thirty minutes where they completed the two self-report measures. The researcher began by explaining the purpose of the study to the students and that their responses were confidential. Once the students agreed to participate and signed an assent form, they were administered the measures. The students were given a packet of the two measures. They first completed a self-report measure that examined the trait of perfectionism. They also completed a self-report measure that assessed their levels of anxiety. In order to examine the academic achievement of these students, their first semester cumulative GPAs were calculated by obtaining their grades from their school records. In order to maintain confidentiality of the data collected from the students, the data was be coded. Each student was assigned a number using a random number generator and the identifying information was removed from the measures.

### **Analysis**

The data that was collected for this thesis project was quantitative. In order to address my hypothesis, the research analyzed the data using a Pearson correlation in order to examine if there is a linear relationship between total anxiety and overall perfectionism. To answer the first research question, the examiner used a correlated t-test to determine if there is a significant difference between self-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism. If there were a significant difference, the examiner would determine the number of cases where one score is higher than the other score. In order to address the second research question, the researcher used a Pearson correlation to examine the relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and anxiety. The researcher

then used another Pearson correlation to examine the relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism. Once the correlation coefficients were calculated, the researcher compared the coefficients to determine if there was a difference of a tenth. The third research question was addressed using a Pearson correlation to study the relationship between perfectionism and academic achievement. The fourth research question was addressed using a Pearson correlation to study the relationship between anxiety and academic achievement.

## **Results**

### ***Hypothesis 1***

A Pearson correlation was conducted to evaluate if there is a linear relationship between total anxiety and overall perfectionism. The test was significant at an alpha level of 0.01 ( $r=.564$ ,  $N=22$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This suggests that there is a significant, positive correlation between total anxiety and overall perfectionism.

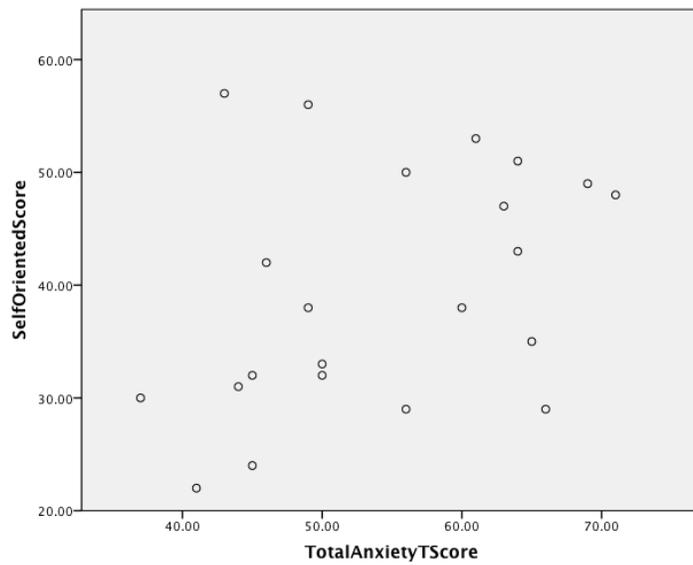
### ***Research Question 1***

A correlated t-test was conducted to evaluate if there is a significant difference between self-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism. The test was significant at an alpha level of 0.05 ( $t(22) = .000$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This suggests there is a significant difference between self-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism. Of the 22 participants, 19 students had higher scores of Self-Oriented Perfectionism.

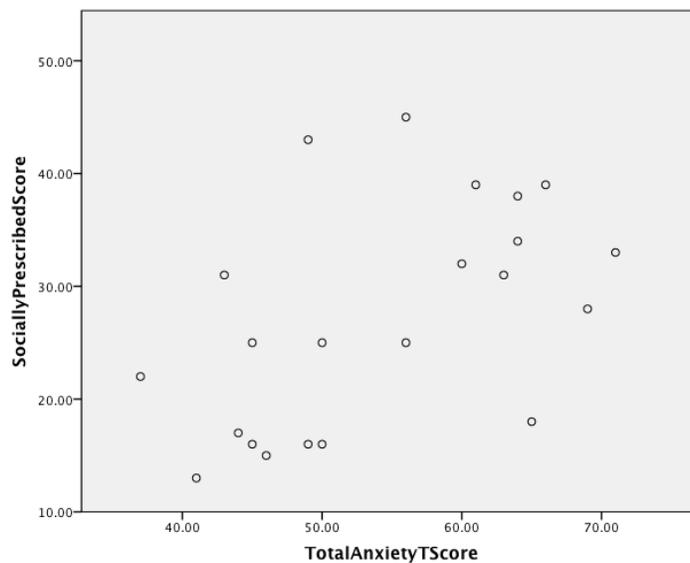
### ***Research Question 2***

A Pearson correlation was conducted to evaluate if there is a linear relationship between total anxiety and self-oriented perfectionism. The test was not significant at an

alpha level of 0.05 ( $r=.385$ ,  $N=22$ ,  $p > .05$ ). A Pearson correlation was conducted to evaluate if there is a linear relationship between total anxiety and socially-prescribed perfectionism. The test was significant at an alpha level of 0.05 ( $r=.518$ ,  $N=22$ ,  $p < .05$ ). There is a difference of a tenth between the Pearson Correlations, suggesting that there is a stronger correlation between Total Anxiety and Socially-Prescribed Perfectionism.



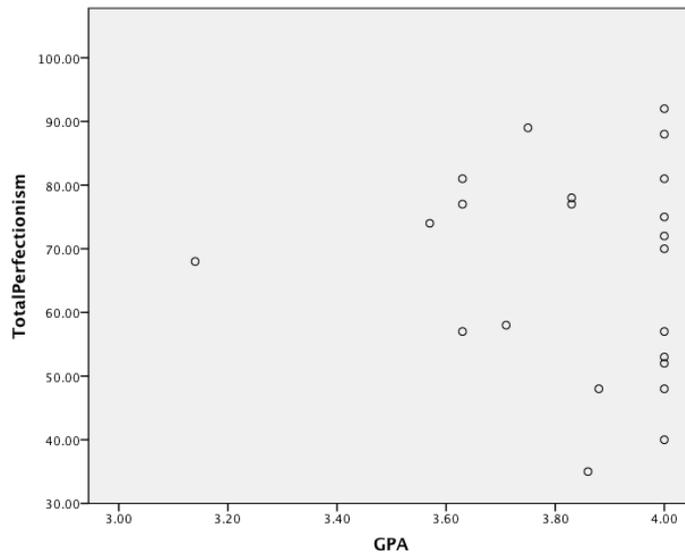
*Figure 1. Total Anxiety and Self-Oriented Perfectionism*



*Figure 2. Total Anxiety and Socially Prescribed Perfectionism*

### ***Research Question 3***

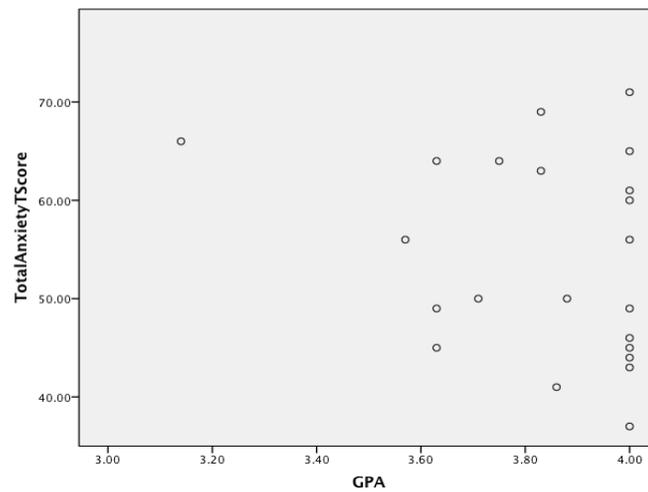
A Pearson Correlation was conducted to determine if there is a relationship between overall perfectionism and academic achievement (GPA). The test was not significant at an alpha level of 0.05 ( $r = -.125$ ,  $N = 22$ ,  $p > .05$ ). This suggests that there is not a significant correlation between overall perfectionism and academic achievement.



***Figure 3. Total Perfectionism and GPA***

### ***Research Question 4***

A Pearson Correlation was conducted to determine if there is a relationship between total anxiety and academic achievement (GPA). The test was not significant at an alpha level of 0.05 ( $r = -.256$ ,  $N = 22$ ,  $p > .05$ ). This suggests that there is not a significant correlation between total anxiety and academic achievement.



*Figure 4. Total Anxiety and GPA*

## Discussion

There was a significant, positive correlation between Total Anxiety score and Overall Perfectionism score. This suggests that students with higher levels of perfectionism tend to also have higher levels of anxiety. There was not a significant difference between self-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism, suggesting that these gifted students do not experience one type of perfectionism more than the other. There was no correlation between Total Anxiety Score and Self-Oriented Perfectionism, suggesting that the students who have higher levels of Self-Oriented Perfectionism do not experience higher levels of anxiety. However, there was a significant, positive correlation between the Total Anxiety Score and Socially Prescribed Perfectionism, suggesting that students who have higher levels of this type of perfectionism may also experience higher levels of anxiety. The results of this study also

demonstrated that there was not a significant correlation between overall perfectionism and academic achievement, or between total anxiety and academic achievement.

The information found in this research study can be helpful to inform school psychologists when considering the counseling needs of gifted students. This study suggests that gifted students who have higher levels of perfectionism tend to have higher levels of anxiety as well. When working with these students, it is important to recognize the impact their perfectionistic characteristics can have on their mental health. Although these students are high achieving, the high standards that they attempt to achieve can negatively impact these students. When working with these students in a counseling relationship, it is important to be aware of this link between perfectionism and anxiety so that proper steps may be taken in your sessions, such as working towards changing their self-talk and becoming more realistic with their goals and achievements. This information can be used to help students understand how their perfectionism may impact their social and emotional well-being. The research suggests that gifted students may experience higher levels of self-oriented perfectionism than socially prescribed perfectionism. It is helpful for school psychologists to be aware of this so that they may take the time to learn the type of perfectionism the student is experiencing in order to help guide their counseling. If gifted students are experiencing higher levels of self-oriented perfectionism, it is important to understand this and how it impacts them.

According to this research, gifted students who have higher levels of Socially Prescribed Perfectionism may experience higher levels of Anxiety when compared to students who have higher levels of Self-Oriented Perfectionism. This suggests that when the pressure to be perfect comes from external sources, it may impact the students more

in terms of their mental health. When school psychologists work with these students, it is important to understand how the anxiety manifests in order to address their needs properly. For example, being that these students may feel significant pressure to be perfect exerted by their family, teachers, or peers, the anxiety that manifests may significantly impact their social relationships. This is something to keep in mind when working with gifted students who experience this type of perfectionism.

The research also demonstrated that there is no correlation between anxiety or perfectionism and GPA. This suggests that higher levels of perfectionism do not necessarily contribute to high academic achievement. This also suggests that GPAs are not necessarily impacted by higher levels of anxiety in this population. There may have been no relationships found being that the GPAs of the students in this study were significantly high. However, these findings provide important information for practitioners in terms of monitoring the gifted students they may work with. As stated previously, school systems often will look for academic impact in order to recognize when a student is struggling. However, as this study demonstrated, gifted students tend to be high achieving and their academic performance tends to not be impacted, even if they are experiencing high levels of anxiety. It is important for school psychologists to be aware of this so that they may monitor their gifted students and provide support when needed. Limitations of the study and implications for further research are discussed below.

### ***Limitations of the Study***

The sample size for this research is one limitation of this study. There were a small number of students who participated in this study. There were also disproportions

in the grade levels of the students who completed the measures. Sixth grade students had the highest number of measures completed while eighth grade students had the lowest. Therefore, the findings of this research cannot be generalized to other middle school students. A second limitation of the study is the middle school that was used for the research study. Data was collected at only one center-based gifted middle school program in Central Virginia because this was the school that the researcher received permission from to collect the data. Being that only one middle school program was used in this study, the findings cannot be generalized to other middle school students in other locations.

Another limitation of the study involves the parent consent forms that were required for student participation in the study. Students were required to take responsibility by sharing the forms with their parents, having them sign their consent, and then return the form to their teacher at school. Although students were reminded and phone calls were made to parents, the majority of students failed to return the forms. This low rate of response suggests that the sample is likely biased and unrepresentative of the entire gifted middle school population. The gifted program that was used can also be seen as a limitation of this study. The students who participated in this research study are currently enrolled in a center-based gifted program. All of their classes, aside from their electives, are gifted level classes and they attend their classes with the same students. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be representative of all gifted students, including those who are not in specific programs.

### ***Implications for Further Research***

Future studies on the relationship between perfectionism and anxiety in middle school students would ideally be conducted with a larger number of participants that is equally representative of all middle school grade levels. In addition, it would be ideal to conduct this research at multiple middle schools, possibly across school systems in order to have results that are able to be generalized to other middle school students. It would also be helpful to examine if a correlation exists between perfectionism and anxiety in gifted students not enrolled in specific gifted programs, but rather in regular education classes. This may help to determine whether the center-based gifted programs may influence the levels of perfectionism and anxiety in the gifted students.

## Appendix A

### Parent/Guardian Informed Consent

#### Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Kelsey Owens from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between perfectionism and anxiety in gifted middle school students to help inform interventions. This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of her thesis for her Ed.S degree.

#### Research Procedures

Should you decide to allow your child to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of two questionnaires that will be administered to individual participants in their school. They will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to their feelings about their schoolwork and themselves. The researcher will also be obtaining their GPA from their school records to examine if there is any educational impact.

#### Time Required

Participation in this study will require 30 minutes of your child's time from their specials class time. Students will not miss any instructional time from their core subject classes.

#### Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your child's involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life). Participation in this study will not exempt the students from the requirements of their specials class.

#### Benefits

*Potential benefits from participation in this study include schools gaining a better understanding of the needs of their students.*

#### Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented at a symposium event at James Madison University. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers will be destroyed.

#### Participation & Withdrawal

Your child's participation is entirely voluntary. He/she is free to choose not to participate. Should you and your child choose to participate, he/she can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

### Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your child's participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Kelsey Owens, M.A.  
Graduate Psychology  
James Madison University  
Owenskn@dukes.jmu.edu

Dr. Deborah Kipps-Vaughan  
Graduate Psychology  
James Madison University  
Telephone: (540) 568-4557  
Kippsvdx@jmu.edu

### Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Cockley  
Chair, Institutional Review Board  
James Madison University  
(540) 568-2834  
[cocklede@jmu.edu](mailto:cocklede@jmu.edu)

### Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of my child as a participant in this study. I freely consent for my child to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

I give consent for my child to complete the Revised Children and Adolescent Manifest Anxiety Scale (RCMAS-2)

I give consent for my child to complete the Children and Adolescent Perfectionism Scale (CAPS)

I give consent for the researcher to access my child's GPA from their school record for research purposes.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Parent/Guardian's initial)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Child (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent/Guardian (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent/Guardian (Signed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher (Signed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix B  
**CHILD ASSENT FORM** (Ages 7-12)

IRB # 15-0027

**ASSESSMENT OF PERFECTIONISM AND ANXIETY IN GIFTED MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS**

I would like to invite you to take part in this study. I am asking you because you are a middle school student who has been identified as gifted.

In this study, I will try to learn more about how you feel about school and feel about yourself. To do the study I will ask you to complete two questionnaires that will ask you questions about yourself and your feelings. These questionnaires will take you about 30 minutes to complete. I will also be collecting your GPA from your school file.

Your responses will be completely confidential.

Participating in this study will not hurt you in any way. The reason I am doing this study is to help your school learn more about its gifted students and make sure that they are giving you the support you need.

Your parents have been asked to give their permission for you to take part in this study. Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you decide to participate in the study, you can stop at any time.

If you have any questions at any time, please ask the researcher.

**IF YOU PRINT YOUR NAME ON THIS FORM IT MEANS THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE AND HAVE READ EVERYTHING THAT IS ON THIS FORM. YOU AND YOUR PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Child (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

Kelsey Owens, M.A.  
 Graduate Psychology  
 James Madison University  
 Owenskn@dukes.jmu.edu

**YOUTH ASSENT FORM** (Ages 13-17)  
IRB # 15-0027

**ASSESSMENT OF PERFECTIONISM AND ANXIETY IN GIFTED MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS**

I would like to invite you to take part in this study. I am asking you because you a middle school student who has been identified as gifted.

In this study, I will try to learn more about how you feel about school and feel about yourself. To do the study I will ask you to complete two questionnaires that will ask you questions about yourself and your feelings. These questionnaires will take you about 30 minutes to complete. I will also be collecting your GPA from your school file.

Your responses will be completely confidential.

Participating in this study will not hurt you in any way. The reason I am doing this study is to help your school learn more about its gifted students and make sure that they are giving you the support you need.

Your parents have been asked to give their permission for you to take part in this study. Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you decide to participate in the study, you can stop at any time.

If you have any questions at any time, please ask the researcher.

**IF YOU PRINT YOUR NAME ON THIS FORM IT MEANS THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE AND HAVE READ EVERYTHING THAT IS ON THIS FORM. YOU AND YOUR PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Child (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Kelsey Owens, M.A.  
Graduate Psychology  
James Madison University  
Owenskn@dukes.jmu.edu

## Appendix C

**Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale-Second Edition (RCMAS-2)**

1. Often I feel sick in my stomach	YES	NO
2. I am nervous	YES	NO
3. I often worry about something bad happening to me	YES	NO
4. I fear other kids will laugh at me in class	YES	NO
5. I have too many headaches	YES	NO
6. I worry that others do not like me	YES	NO
7. I wake up scared sometimes	YES	NO
8. I get nervous around people	YES	NO
9. I feel someone will tell me I do things the wrong way	YES	NO
10. I fear other people will laugh at me	YES	NO
11. I have trouble making up my mind	YES	NO
12. I get nervous when things do not go the right way for me	YES	NO
13. Others seem to do things easier than I can	YES	NO
14. I like everyone I know	YES	NO
15. Often I have trouble getting my breath	YES	NO
16. I worry a lot of the time	YES	NO
17. I feel bad if people laugh at me	YES	NO
18. I am afraid of a lot of things	YES	NO
19. I am always kind	YES	NO
20. I get mad easily	YES	NO
21. I worry about what my parents will say to me	YES	NO
22. I feel that others do not like the way I do things	YES	NO
23. I am afraid to give a talk to my class	YES	NO
24. I always have good manners	YES	NO
25. It is hard for me to get sleep at night	YES	NO
26. I worry about what other people think about me	YES	NO
27. I feel alone even when there are people with me	YES	NO
28. I get teased at school	YES	NO
29. I am always good	YES	NO
30. My feelings get hurt easily	YES	NO
31. My hands feel sweaty	YES	NO
32. I worry about making mistakes in front of people	YES	NO
33. I am always nice to everyone	YES	NO
34. I am tired a lot	YES	NO
35. I worry about what is going to happen	YES	NO
36. Other people are happier than I am	YES	NO
37. I am afraid to speak up in a group	YES	NO
38. I tell the truth every single time	YES	NO
39. I have bad dreams	YES	NO
40. I get angry sometimes	YES	NO
41. I worry about being called on in class	YES	NO
42. I worry when I go to bed at night	YES	NO

43. It is hard for me to keep my mind on my schoolwork	YES	NO
44. I sometimes say things I should not say	YES	NO
45. I worry about someone beating me up	YES	NO
46. I wiggle in my seat a lot	YES	NO
47. A lot of people are against me	YES	NO
48. I have told a lie	YES	NO
49. I worry about saying something dumb	YES	NO

## Appendix D

**Children and Adolescent Perfectionism Scale (CAPS)**

**Below you will find some sentences. Before you read each sentence, we would like some information about you. Please answer the following questions:**

1. What is your name?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you a boy or a girl? (Circle one)  
BOY    GIRL
3. How old are you?  
\_\_\_\_\_ years old
4. What grade are you in right now?  
\_\_\_\_\_ grade
- 

This is a chance to find out about yourself. It is not a test. There are no right answers and everyone will have different answers. Be sure that your answers show how you actually are. Please do not talk about your answers with anyone else. We will keep your answers private and not show them to anyone.

When you are ready to begin, please read each sentence below and pick your answer by circling a number from “1” to “5”. The five possible answers for each sentence are listed below:

- 1 = False—Not at all true of me  
2 = Mostly False  
3 = Neither True Nor False  
4 = Mostly True  
5 = Very True of me

For example, if you were given the sentence “I like to read comic books,” you would circle a “5” if this is very true of you. If you were given the sentence “I like to keep my room neat and tidy,” you would circle a “1” if this was false and not at all true of you. You are now ready to begin.

Please be sure to answer all of the sentences.

- |  | <b>False</b> |   |   |   | <b>True</b> |
|--|--------------|---|---|---|-------------|
| 1. I try to be perfect in every thing I do.....                                | 1            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5           |
| 2. I want to be the best at everything I do. ....                              | 1            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5           |
| 3. My parents don't always expect me to be perfect in<br>everything I do. .... | 1            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5           |
| 4. I feel that I have to do my best all the time. ....                         | 1            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5           |

5. There are people in my life who expect me to be perfect. .... 1 2 3 4 5
- 
6. I always try for the top score on a test..... 1 2 3 4 5
7. It really bothers me if I don't do my best all the time. .... 1 2 3 4 5
8. My family expects me to be perfect..... 1 2 3 4 5
9. I don't always try to be the best. .... 1 2 3 4 5
10. People expect more from me than I am able to give..... 1 2 3 4 5
11. I get mad at myself when I make a mistake. .... 1 2 3 4 5
12. Other people think that I have failed if I do not do my very best  
all the time..... 1 2 3 4 5
13. Other people always expect me to be perfect..... 1 2 3 4 5
14. I get upset if there is even one mistake in my work. .... 1 2 3 4 5
15. People around me expect me to be great at everything. .... 1 2 3 4 5
16. When I do something, it has to be perfect..... 1 2 3 4 5
17. My teachers expect my work to be perfect..... 1 2 3 4 5
18. I do not have to be the best at everything I do. .... 1 2 3 4 5
19. I am always expected to do better than others..... 1 2 3 4 5
20. Even when I pass, I feel that I have failed if I didn't get  
one of the highest marks in the class..... 1 2 3 4 5
21. I feel that people ask too much of me. .... 1 2 3 4 5
22. I can't stand to be less than perfect. .... 1 2 3 4 5
- 
-

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