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## Assessing Consistency of Three Perfectionism Scales

Brianna Lawry  
bnl39@uakron.edu

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# Assessing Consistency of Three Perfectionism Scales

Brianna N. Lawry & Charles A. Waehler, Ph.D.



## Abstract

Perfectionism is described as a personality trait characterized by having excessively high standards and overly critical evaluations of performance. However, there is some debate as to whether perfectionism is a stable personality trait or a fluctuating state attribute. To investigate this, the current study assessed the test-retest reliabilities of the three most widely used perfectionism scales (the APS-R, HFMPs, and FMPS) over a three-week period and examined the influence of various contextual variables. Data from this college sample (N=43; mean age=21; SD=3.7) demonstrated high reliability and internal consistency for all three scales with negligible influence from the contextual variables examined. These findings support the notion that perfectionism is a trait characteristic that remains stable over time.

## Introduction

### Background

- The increase in perfectionism noted over recent decades is concerning considering the link between perfectionism and various negative health outcomes
- Determining contextual variables related to higher levels of perfectionism may help identify individuals who are especially at risk

### Objectives

- Investigate whether levels of perfectionism are consistent over time by measuring temporal consistency of three perfectionism measures
- View perfectionism scores in relation to various contextual variables (e.g., plans to attend graduate school, completing an important exam or project, perceived competition in field, positive self-beliefs)

## Methods

### Materials

- Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R)
- Hewitt-Flett Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (HFMPs)
- Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS)

### Procedure

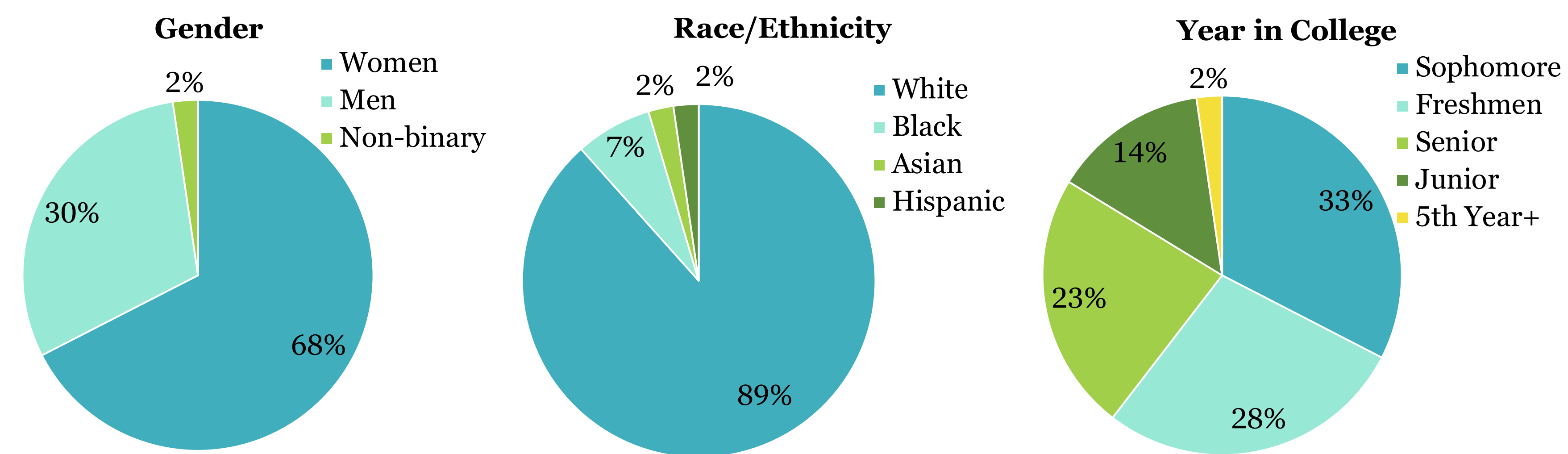
- Students completed two surveys spaced three weeks apart, each containing the APS-R, the HFMPs, and the FMPS
- Correlation coefficients and Cronbach's Alpha were calculated for each scale
- Correlations and t-tests examined the influence of contextual variables

### Participants

- 106 participants completed part 1; 60 completed part 2
- Final sample of N=43
- Mean age = 21, SD = 3.7

## Results

### Demographics



### Overall Scale Test-Retest Correlation Coefficients and Alpha Levels

Scale		Time 1	Time 2	Test-Retest
APS-R	Mean	112.16	109.26	.86
	SD	17.10	19.36	
	Alpha	.87	.90	
HFMPs	Mean	184.26	184.60	.90
	SD	29.44	30.53	
	Alpha	.91	.92	
FMPS	Mean	114.12	113.74	.84
	SD	18.36	18.82	
	Alpha	.90	.92	

### Subscale Correlations of Interest

	APS-R			HFMPs			FMPS			
	HS	D	OD	SO	OO	SP	CMD	PEC	PS	OG
<b>Test-Retest</b>	.89	.75	.84	.89	.67	.84	.83	.89	.79	.77
<b>Competition</b>	** .44			* .36					** .52	
<b>Positive Self-beliefs</b>		** -.41					** -.42	** -.39		

HS = High Standards; D = Discrepancy; OD = Order; SO = Self-Oriented; OO = Other-Oriented; SP = Socially-Prescribed; CMD = Concern over Mistakes and Doubts; PEC = Parental Expectations and Concern; PS = Personal Standards; OG = Organization  
\*Indicates significance at the .05 level; \*\*Indicates significance at the .01 level

## Discussion

### Conclusions

- Good reliability and excellent internal consistency was demonstrated for all three perfectionism scales
- Plans to attend graduate school and completing an important exam or project showed little to no effect on mean perfectionism scores
- Significant positive correlations were found between an individual's perception of competitiveness in their major/field of interest and the High Standards, Self-Oriented, and Personal Standards subscales
- Significant negative correlations were found between an individual's positive self-beliefs and the subscales for Discrepancy, Concern over Mistakes and Doubts, and Parental Expectations and Concerns
- Based on the data, perfectionism appears to be a trait characteristic that is stable over time
- More research is needed to investigate the relationship between certain subscales and contextual variables

### Limitations

- Data analysis was limited by small sample size
- Questionable representativeness – more perfectionistic students may be more inclined to earn extra credit through research participation

### Future Research

- Investigate more contextual variables with a larger, more diverse sample
- Examine long-term fluctuations in perfectionism through longitudinal study
- Administer perfectionism scales during times of high and low academic stress (finals week vs. summer break) for better control of variables

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