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Perfectionism, pessimism, optimism, and coping styles among college students

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Perfectionism is a universal theme among many college students. For some students dimensions of perfectionism can have a positive or a negative impact on their lives. This study examined dimensions of perfectionism and their relationship to pessimism, optimism, and coping styles among students. 339 students in a Greek fraternity and sorority completed a survey using the following measures: The Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R), Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, Coping Style Inventory, and Extended Life Orientation Test. Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength of relationships between dimensions of perfectionism, coping styles, and outlook on life (e.g. optimism and pessimism). A significant gender difference was found on high standards subscale of the APS-R. The results demonstrated that positive and negative dimensions of perfectionism do exist. Furthermore results showed that a pessimistic outlook on life significantly correlated with suppressive and reactive styles of coping, while optimism significantly correlated with reflective coping style. Implications for interventions to address both positive and negative dimensions of perfectionism among college students are discussed.