Evaluating the Relationship Between Malignant Self-Regard and Achievement Striving

Carly D. Evich
Eastern Michigan University, cevich@emich.edu

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Carly D. Evich
Dr. Steven Huprich, Mentor

ABSTRACT

Clinical psychological research has identified an empirical and theoretical overlap among Masochistic (also known as Self-Defeating), Depressive, and Vulnerably Narcissistic forms of personality pathology. Together, these personalities have been found to possess many overlapping characteristics, which are proposed to be described through the *Malignant Self-Regard* personality construct (*MSR*; Huprich, in press). MSR is characterized by self-criticism, perfectionistic tendencies, frequent depression, desires for interrelatedness, feelings of inadequacy, shame, guilt, hypersensitivity to criticism, self-defeating actions, pessimism, and poor anger management. MSR captures the mind's self-destructive attack on one's sense of self, which signals concern about how the "self" is being viewed by others. This, in turn, affects one's self-representation, which consequently affects his/her interpersonal relationships and subsequent behavior. Some of the many dimensions requiring ongoing evaluation in the MSR construct are the observable personality characteristics and behaviors that are expressions of its underlying pathology. One observable characteristic particularly associated with MSR is achievement striving.

Thus, this study will examine the theoretical relationship between MSR and achievement striving. The following personality dimensions will then be evaluated for their relationship to MSR: perfectionism, effortful control, impression management,

relationship satisfaction, and academic achievement. It is hypothesized that perfectionism, effortful control, positive impression-management strategies, and academic achievement will be positively correlated with MSR, while relationship satisfaction will be negatively correlated. Results of this study will provide a richer understanding of the nature of MSR.

Malignant Self-Regard

Malignant Self-Regard is a personality construct that reflects the mind's destructive attack on an individual's self-concept. This process of "self-under-attack" is insidious and tends to become activated when one's desires to be loved, cared for, or accepted by others become hindered by their own self-critical thoughts (Huprich & Nelson, 2014). These situations of failed interrelatedness can lead to a dysregulation of one's self-regard, which in turn can create a pathological understanding and manifestation of the self (i.e., MSR). As a suggested organizational framework for the overlap between (1) Masochistic (Self-Defeating), (2) Depressive, and (3) Vulnerably Narcissistic personalities, MSR gives attention to the common psychological processes that are at work within the minds of those who suffer from this kind of personality pathology. These internal processes are consistently activated in specific situations, which can indicate pathological elements in one's functioning (Huprich, in press). In efforts to assess MSR and some conditions under which specific, related thoughts and feelings become activated, Huprich developed the *Malignant Self-Regard Questionnaire* (*MSRQ*; Huprich, 2011), a 52-item Likert-format, self-report measure utilized to assess the MSR construct. The MSRQ has been proven to be reliable and valid when assessed against an undergraduate population (Huprich & Nelson, 2014).

Huprich and Nelson (2014) highlighted the following as characteristics of MSR: "depression proneness; guilt, shame, and inadequacy; self-criticism; hypersensitive self-focus; pessimism; perfectionism in the context of grandiose fantasies about the self; desires for approval and acceptance; masochism; and problematic management of their anger" (p. 991). It is through the expression

of these dynamic characteristics that the pathological processes of MSR are evidenced. As mentioned, however, the activation of MSR is generally situationally-driven, with it most often occurring "during interpersonal contexts that evoke concerns about how the self is being viewed by others" (Huprich & Nelson, 2014, p. 991). Therefore, the MSR personality can often operate in a seemingly harmless way, with its maladaptive features remaining undetected.

For example, Huprich (in press) notes that MSR individuals can appear well-functioning and without any underlying personality in their better times. In fact, many MSR individuals will go to great lengths to assist others, even choosing to put themselves in seemingly critical environments that make them uncomfortable, all for the chance at interpersonal relatedness or approval. However, Huprich (in press) explains that when they are unrecognized, disapproved of, or met with low levels of interest, MSR sufferers will likely feel hurt, angry, disappointed, and possibly engage in self-defeating behaviors". Outwardly, though, it may appear that these individuals are receiving adequate levels of attention and validation (Huprich, in press). This explains why the MSR personality can remain unrecognized by others, yet still have detrimental effects on one's self-representation, due to its underlying, internally experienced pathology.

After assessing the reliability and validity of the MSR construct, Huprich and Nelson (2014) concluded that two primary, interrelated dimensions contribute to MSR. These involve "being particularly self-critical and negative while also having perfectionistic and high-seeking aspirations" (p. 995).). In comparison with the focus on static, behavioral features of pathological personalities within the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Huprich, in press, p. 22), this focus on the interplay of internal thoughts, feelings, and desires is not only unique, but also highlights the common self-structure among Masochistic (Self-Defeating), Depressive and Vulnerably Narcissistic personalities. This self-structure, or way of thinking about and viewing the self, interacts with the way MSR individuals view others. A dynamic interplay between the self and the "other" emerges, which consequently leaves one's self-representation

vulnerable to being influenced by others' opinions (Huprich, in press; Huprich & Nelson, 2014). MSR individuals will internally struggle with their desires for perfection, acceptance, and recognition, because they cannot adequately maintain this internal self-worth on their own, while outwardly experiencing negative, self-deprecating feelings and engaging in self-defeating behavioral patterns.

Though central features of MSR personalities, such as self-critical thoughts, and feelings of shame and guilt have been defined, other observable personality characteristics of MSR associated with its underlying pathological elements also require clarification. The identification of such characteristics can assist personality researchers in understanding MSR personalities in everyday settings.

One broad domain of observable characteristics of particular interest to this study is achievement striving. Below, an initial overview of the theoretical representations of achievement striving in the current literature will be given. Following this section, a pairwise review at the theoretical level of the relationships between achievement striving and the personalities most associated with MSR will be offered as support for their interrelatedness. The theoretical similarities across these relationships will then be discussed, as will the necessity of further understanding the MSR-achievement striving relationship.

Achievement Striving

Generally speaking, achievement striving is viewed as a characteristic that "reflects high aspirations, diligence and a desire for success…" (Hill, Hall, & Appleton, 2010, p. 164). Mills (2011) describes achievement striving as "an aspect of personality representing the degree to which an individual seeks to meet certain goals, regardless of the effort necessary to do so" (p. 360). In reference to business, Bluen, Barling, and Burns (1990) view achievement striving as "the extent to which individuals take their work seriously, are active, and work hard" (p. 212). However, the more widely accepted conceptualization of achievement striving in the personality literature may be reflected at the item level

within Costa and McCrae's (1992) Conscientiousness domain scale of the NEO-PI-R (as cited in Moon, 2001). Moon (2001) notes that the items of Costa and McCrae's Achievement Striving domain scale reflect self-centered, high aspiration levels, which stress an individual's personal and career goals without concern for others. In the NEO-PI-R Manual (Costa & McCrae, 1992), "the items of the C4: Achievement Striving facet scale… suggest that high scorers have goals which they pursue in an orderly and energetic fashion…and that they may sometimes devote themselves excessively to work" (Costa and McCrae, 1998, p. 122). In contrast, Costa and McCrae (1998), as well as Hogan and Hogan (1992) and Watson and Clark (1997), recognize that "other conceptions of achievement striving are entirely possible: they might emphasize attention seeking, leadership, or social dominance, and might be more closely related to Extraversion than Conscientiousness" (Costa & McCrae, 1998, p. 123).

As evidence of this conceptual variability, a different conceptualization of achievement striving is needed when applied to MSR personalities. Although partially aligned with MSR, Costa and McCrae's aforementioned definition of achievement striving fails to reflect the influence of others' perceptions on one's desire to achieve and be recognized. For example, vulnerability to the criticisms of others is one factor that motivates MSR individuals to want to achieve, for it is the individual's hope that his/her accomplishments will deflect criticism and, instead, merit acceptance (Huprich, in press). For instance, Huprich (in press) notes that "those who have MSR will likely talk favorably and enthusiastically about their achievement strivings," yet will become silently angry, hurt, or disappointed when these strivings go unrecognized (p. 21). For these reasons, this study will operationally define achievement striving in MSR personalities as a personality characteristic that reflects a strong desire to accomplish goals, and be recognized for them, in order to facilitate interpersonal relatedness, deflect criticism, and unconsciously regulate self-regard.

Furthermore, when looking at achievement striving from the perspective of the MSR personality, careful attention has been

given to the separation of performance/achievement from the success-seeking attitude behind it. While Nonis and Wright (2003) found that "students who were high in achievement striving…were better performers as measured by CGPA [cumulative grade point average], perceived performance, and CECA [credit earned to credit attempted] ratio" (p. 338), this distinction between variables is made out of an effort to direct the current research focus away from performance/achievement levels, and instead toward the intense drive or desire to achieve that is most characteristic of MSR personalities. While previous studies have identified the common psychological processes associated with the personalities organized around MSR, their outward manifestations still require clarification. This study proposes that the achievement striving attitude is a potential outward representation of the pathology underlying MSR personalities, as based upon its aforementioned operational definition.

The Interrelatedness between Achievement Striving and Related Personalities Organized under MSR

As stated above, MSR is believed to be an organizational framework for the overlap between Masochistic (Self-Defeating), Depressive and Vulnerably Narcissistic personalities, which is due their similar theoretical descriptions, developmental experiences, and their empirical relatedness when assessed clinically and non-clinically (Huprich, in press). Individually, Masochistic (Self-Defeating), Depressive and Vulnerably Narcissistic personalities have each been found to be theoretically related to the construct of achievement striving. An overview of these theoretical relationships will be analyzed in turn.

(1) Masochistic (Self-Defeating) Personality. The Masochistic (Self-Defeating) personality is generally character-ized by the rejection of pleasurable opportunities due to feeling undeserving, worrying about the inability to live up to new re-sponsibilities and experiences of guilt as opposed to positive feel-ings. Individuals possessing this personality will often minimize or discount their achievements (Schill, Beyler, & Sharp, 1993). Huprich and Fine (1996) note other DSM-II-R diagnostic crite-

ria for Self-Defeating Personality Disorder, including "[failure] to accomplish tasks crucial to his or her personal objectives despite demonstrated ability to do so" (p. 234). This rejection of positive experiences, including the few accomplishments one with a self-defeating personality might be able to achieve, could be indicative of failure-avoidance behavior (Thompson, 2004).

Thompson (2004) notes that "Failure-avoidant behaviours are those that minimise risk to self-worth in the event of failure whilst avoiding the negative implications of poor performance in terms of damage to self-worth" (p. 3). Individuals who engage in these behaviors "are likely to underachieve relative to their ability, find achievement costly, experience diminished intrinsic motivation and burnout" (Thompson, 2004, p. 5). Thompson (2004) further describes strategies used by these individuals, whose characteristics feature significant overlap with self-defeating personalities. For example, failure-avoidant individuals tend to self-handicap by means of "claiming emotional upset prior to an important test, or intentionally sustaining an injury," thereby protecting themselves from possible, poor performance – a behavior similar to the self-sacrificing behavior characteristic of self-defeating individuals (p. 6-7). Other failure-avoidant strategies, including procrastination and one described as *impostor fears*, have been found to be associated with fear of failure and the belief that achievements are obtained as a result of external factors or luck (Thompson, 2004). These strategies, along with the defensive strategy of placing unrealistically low expectations on one's achievement levels in order to avoid failure, overlap with self-defeating personality characteristics. In turn, the theoretical relationship between self-defeating personalities and achievement striving within the MSR framework can be seen as a significant inverse.

(2) Depressive Personality. The DSM-IV diagnostic criteria for Depressive Personality Disorder consist of personality characteristics pertaining to frequent gloominess, feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and criticism of self and others, along with the likelihood of frequent rumination about troubles, and feelings of guilt (*American Psychiatric Association*, 1994). The interrelationship between depressive personality symptoms

and achievement striving has been accounted for both in the theoretical overlap between the two, as well as in empirical findings. Ryder, McBride and Bagby (2008) discuss two related personality styles believed to be associated with anaclitic and introjective depression. The *affiliation* style characterizes highly dependent individuals who possess "a longing to be loved, a need for approval from others, and vulnerability to depression following an interpersonal loss" (Ryder et al., 2008, p. 208-209). By contrast, the *achievement* style represents "a strong need to avoid being controlled by others, a negative self-evaluation, and vulnerability to depression following an achievement failure" (Ryder et al., 2008, p. 209). Prior studies conducted by Beck (1983) and Blatt, D'Afflitti, and Quinlan (1976) have found, however, that having high levels of both personality styles, particularly when confronted with self-perceived achievement or interpersonal failures, put individuals at considerable risk for episodes of acute depression (as cited in Ryder et al., 2008). In addition, Ryder et al. (2008) found both the affiliation and achievement personality styles to be empirically related with Depressive Personality Disorder.

Furthermore, Castro and Rice (2003) theorized that concerns about making mistakes and doubting one's actions, both indicative of achievement striving tendencies, could increase the possibility of the presence of depressive symptoms in that individual. Huprich (1998) noted that these apparent perfectionistic strivings may result from attempts to prevent further loss or rejection, beyond that already experienced from the physical and/or emotional loss of an early caregiver that led to their depressive personality symptoms (as cited in Huprich, 2003). Persons, Miranda, and Perloff (1991) found that individuals "who were more achievement oriented reported more feelings of failure, self-hate, self-blame, guilt, loss of interest in other people, and hopelessness, than those who were less achievement-oriented" (p. 221). Furthermore, Beck (1983) and Blatt et al. (1976) assert that feelings of depression are especially likely to be present following the occurrence of negative events that are compatible with one's personality type, particularly in cases of sociotropy versus autonomy (Beck, 1983), or dependency versus self-

criticism (Blatt, 1974; as cited in Ryder et al., 2008). Specifically, sociotropic/dependent individuals, who have an affiliation personality style and are concerned with interpersonal relatedness and social acceptance, are at risk for depression following social rejection. By contrast, autonomous/self-critical individuals face a risk for depression following academic failure, as they align with the achievement personality style and thus place immense value on the achievement of meaningful goals and social status. In turn, the affiliation and achievement styles of personality, as well as both above-identified personality types, reflect characteristics similar to those present in MSR personalities.

Given the studies discussed above, it appears that there is a significant relationship between depressive personality and achievement striving in the context of MSR. This apparent interrelationship indicates that achievement striving, a desire to accomplish goals in exchange for interpersonal relatedness and regulated self-regard, is based on pathological elements of the depressive personality (e.g. vulnerability to criticism, negative sense of self, dependency on interpersonal relatedness, fear of making mistakes, proneness to guilt/self-blame).

(3) Vulnerably Narcissistic Personality. Due to a sparse amount of literature on the Vulnerably Narcissistic personality, and the research regarding its relationship to the achievement striving attitude, theoretical observations have been made based on conceptual similarities between the two. At a conceptual level, Cooper (1998), Dickinson and Pincus (2003), Pimentel, Ansell, Pincus, and Cain (2006) and Pincus et al. (2009) highlight that the vulnerably narcissistic personality intersects with the grandiose subtype of narcissism, as it is characterized by grandiose fantasies about the self, a sense of entitlement and frequent exploitation of others for personal gain (as cited in Besser and Priel, 2010). Additionally, the Vulnerably Narcissistic personality has "shyness, constraint, and even the appearance of empathy," along with high levels of anxiety surrounding the maintenance of social relationships, and it relies on external feedback to manage self-esteem, due to the inability to utilize self-enhancement strategies (Besser & Priel, 2010, p. 877-878). The theoretical relationship between vulnerable

narcissism and achievement striving, however, is most evident in the context of grandiose fantasies about the self, in comparison to others' evaluations of an individual and his/her accomplishments.

Kealy and Rasmussen (2012) note that "themes of fragility and depletion may be predominant and overtly expressed, yet grandiose fantasies may hover covertly in the background" (p. 358). Furthermore, because "vulnerable narcissism is characterized by a tendency to engage in self-criticism and to experience intense anger when their feelings of entitlement are violated" (Besser & Zeigler-Hill, 2011, p. 201), it seems reasonable to suggest that vulnerably narcissistic personalities would desire to carry out grandiose fantasies of their achievements, while struggling to validate their need for entitlement with feedback and approval from others. Unfortunately, their anger with themselves and others, along with their self-criticism, which often results from their achievements and entitlements going unrecognized, may actually be self-defeating, because they may not understand how their self-belittling is truly perceived by others (Besser & Zeigler-Hill, 2011).

Theoretical Similarities Across Interrelationships Between Achievement Striving and MSR

Theoretical similarities exist across the interrelationships between achievement striving and the personalities organized around MSR (i.e. Masochistic/Self-Defeating, Depressive, and Vulnerably Narcissistic personalities). These similarities include (1) perfectionism, (2) effortful control, (3) impression-management, (4) relationship satisfaction, and (5) academic achievement or performance. All are posited to be associated with achievement striving and are manifested concerns described through MSR. These will be discussed in turn.

(1) Perfectionism. There are various theoretical conceptualizations of this construct in the current literature. Pacht (1984) writes that *perfectionism* is a "no-win scenario," with perfectionists constantly being frustrated by their failure to meet unrealistically high standards (p. 387). Frost, Lahart, and Rosenblate (1991) define the personality characteristic of perfectionism as being present when one's high standards "are

accompanied by tendencies for overly-critical evaluations of one's behavior" (p. 450, as cited in Harvey, Pallant, & Harvey, 2004, p. 1008). Frost et al. (1991) describe these tendencies as a concern over making performance mistakes, a doubt about one's performance quality, a valuing of parental expectations and evaluations, and a strong emphasis on precision and organization (as cited in Harvey et al., 2004). Other researchers view perfectionism as broad, multi-dimensional, and possessing both adaptive and maladaptive features (Enns, Cox, & Clara, 2002; Hill et al., 2010; Stoeber, Hutchfield, & Wood, 2008).

The adaptive features "are related to positive self-esteem and positive psychological adjustment" (Davis & Wosinski, 2012, p. 106) and have been identified as setting attainable standards, putting forth the effort to meet them and being able to feel pleased with one's achievements (Enns et al., 2002). By contrast, the maladaptive features "relate to chronic low self-esteem, negative affect, and symptoms of psychopathology" (Davis & Wosinski, 2012, p. 106), and have been seen as setting unattainable standards, doubting one's ability to meet those standards, and thus procrastinating the work to do so and ultimately feeling inadequate when goals aren't reached (Enns et al., 2002; Davis & Wosinski, 2012). Additionally, within the context of MSR, Huprich (in press) describes perfectionism that may be enacted as a state of mind as a defense against feelings of shame or inadequacy.

At the theoretical level, a combination of these definitions of perfectionism is reflected as an underlying, pathological element through the perfectionistic tendencies related to the MSR personality. Huprich (in press) states that individuals of each personality related to MSR have been found to engage in fantasies involving perfectionism and their accomplishments, each possessing the desire to continuously become more accomplished. "Depressive and narcissistic individuals, in particular, are often hard-working and high achieving; thus their perfectionistic strivings are regularly enforced" (p. 15). In general, MSR individuals are always striving for additional merits to validate their self-worth to others. In reality, though, their achievement fantasies are rarely acknowledged by others (Huprich, in press).

Consequently, due to feeling criticized or rejected, their underlying pathology becomes activated, and in turn the maladaptive features of perfectionism, as described above, emerge.

(2) Impression Management. Schrick, Sharp, Zvonkovic, and Reifman (2012) note that virtually all individuals, regardless of the presence of a pathological personality, wonder about how others perceive them. Just about everyone will try to represent themselves as similar to the image that is most congruent with how they would like to be seen by others (p. 592). Labeled as impression management by Goffman (1959), this behavior "is an aspect of Symbolic Interactionism wherein one manages one's appearance, actions, speech, surroundings, etc. to mesh with expectations associated with a given situation" (Schrick et al., 2012, p. 592). Additionally, Tetlock and Manstead (1985) write that "Impression management refers to the behavioral strategies that people use to create desired social images or identities" (p. 59). In line with this behavior, Huprich (in press) highlights that "[MSR individuals] seek a higher level of being in order to avert criticism or rejection by others" (p. 15). The evaluation of their self-worth is contingent upon feedback from others, thus leaving them highly dependent on external opinions and support for self-esteem preservation (Morf, Torchetti, & Schurch, 2011; as cited in Huprich, in press). It is important to note, however, that MSR individuals are most vulnerable to the opinions of others when they feel criticized.

As Mueller-Hanson, Heggestad, and Thornton (2006) showed that engagement in impression management tends to occur when a situation is believed to be important enough to merit it, MSR individuals might be prone to engaging in this behavior in front of others when they feel highly-criticized. In this way, although struggling to admit it, MSR individuals might initially present their greatest accomplishments and best selves to others in order to avoid criticism, to receive positive feedback, and to seek out interpersonal relatedness, such as friendships with others. In terms of academics, Flett, Blankstein, Hewitt, and Koledin (1992) found that academic perfectionism and procrastination/fear of failure are often associated constructs (as cited in Schrick et al.,

2012). Thus, MSR individuals who strive to bring their unrealistic fantasies of academic achievement to fruition might struggle to reach their own high standards. Impression management can, therefore, be viewed as one of the most observable characteristics, described through MSR, that can become activated as a result of one's achievement strivings.

(3) Effortful Control. Temperament is recognized as the description of "the initial state from which personality develops and [which] links individual differences in behavior to underlying neural networks" (Rothbart, 2007, p. 207). Reactions to one's environment are thus biologically based, and have strong ties to the development of personality and psychopathology. These reactions can be characterized by one of several dimensions of temperament known as effortful control. Rothbart, Ahadi, and Hershey (1994) defined this construct as the "ability to utilize attentional resources and to inhibit behavioral responses in order to regulate emotions and related behaviors" (as cited in Morris et al., 2013, p. 814). In the current literature, Rothbart (2007) defines effortful control as the "ability to choose a course of action under conditions of conflict, to plan for the future, and to detect errors" (p. 207). It is unsurprising to find that much of the research on effortful control is focused on children, because this temperamental construct "has been linked to important developmental outcomes, including the development of conscience and of behavior problems" (Rothbart, 2007, p. 207).

For children, Kochanska, Murray and Harlan (2000) found that conscience is positively predicted by effortful control. Rothbart (2007) mentions empathy, guilt, and low aggressiveness as predicted constructs as well. "[Effortful control] may provide the attentional flexibility needed to react to negative feelings in others without being overwhelmed by them (empathy) and to relate these feelings to responsibility for one's own actions (conscience)" (Rothbart, 2007, p. 209). This supports the assertion that the effortful control dimension of temperament is related to the Big Five personality factor of Conscientiousness. By contrast, Morris et al. (2013) note that due to low levels of effortful control early on, children might struggle to control negative emotions,

including anger and sadness, or to manage emotional and behavioral problems. MSR individuals might also reflect those same emotions and behavioral problems as defensive reactions after receiving criticism, or upon blaming themselves for failed interrelatedness. Rothbart (2007) writes, "Low [effortful control] is a consistent and strong predictor of externalizing problems [acting out] and a less strong predictor of internalizing problems [fear, sadness, low self-esteem]" (p. 209). It can be suggested, then, that MSR individuals' anger in judgmental or overly-critical environments is evidence of their low levels of effortful control in those moments of perceived lack of achievement recognition. However, the positive correlation between effortful control and conscientiousness suggests that MSR individuals would generally exhibit high levels of effort control, due to their high achievement strivings, which are a facet of the Conscientiousness domain scale. Their internalization of problems resulting from high effortful control, and its manifestation into low self-esteem, guilt, and depressive feelings could serve as another explanation for why MSR personalities can be difficult to detect in everyday situations.

(4) Relationship Satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction is defined as an individual's contentment in his/her closest adult relationships (Dumont, Jenkins, Hinson, & Sibcy, 2012). Interpersonal relatedness is a central preoccupation, yet it becomes a struggle for MSR individuals to obtain and maintain. It is therefore conceivable that these individuals might express low levels of relationship satisfaction. Additionally, Harvey et al. (2004) note that "the effects of perfectionism have been related to many personal problems and relationship maladjustment…Discord and conflict arise from individual differences in the extent to which individuals adopt and endorse unrealistically high standards for their partner and themselves" (p. 1008). It is thus suggested that those high in MSR will struggle to achieve positive interpersonal relatedness and maintain the optimal, interpersonal functioning necessary for them to feel satisfied within their relationships.

Additionally, Besser and Priel (2009) theorized about the relationship between the level of attachment experienced during childhood and its effects on adult behavior, particularly on one's

ability to "maintain long-term, intimate relationships" (p. 288). *Attachment anxiety*, or "sensitivity to potential threats of rejection" and *attachment avoidance*, characterized by an individual's "lack of responsiveness [to contact]" were both correlated with high levels of distress and depression due to a lack of emotional self-regulation (p. 288). Due to their depressive tendencies, these emotional problems are similar to those experienced by many MSR individuals, who often long to be accepted, recognized, and cared for by others, despite frequently being disappointed by others (Huprich, in press). Besser and Priel (2009) note that "those high on the attachment-avoidant dimension tend to distance themselves from emotional situations" (p. 289). Theorized to be related to MSR, this dimension also appears to mirror the self-defeating tendency of rejecting opportunities for pleasure, which was found by Huprich, Schmitt, Zimmerman, and Chelminski (2011) to be empirically related to Depressive Personality Disorder (as cited in Huprich, in press). MSR individuals might also "avoid interpersonal relationships because of hypersensitivity to rejection and criticism" related to their vulnerably narcissistic tendencies (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010, p. 427; as cited in Huprich, in press). Furthermore, it has been found that "individuals high on attachment anxiety dimension were found to be more likely to express dysfunctional anger because of their chronic anxiety over rejection and abandonment in close relationships," and were found to possess "overly negative self-evaluations [which] have been associated with pathological forms of narcissism" (Besser & Priel, 2009, p. 292, p. 306). Empirically speaking, Hibbard (1992) found vulnerable narcissism to be positively correlated with both insecure attachment and masochism (as cited in Huprich & Nelson, 2014). As the characteristics of both of the domains of insecure attachment coincide with depressive symptoms, poor management of feelings of anger, masochism, and vulnerable narcissism described through MSR, the overlap between achievement striving, MSR, and relationship satisfaction is evident.

   (5) Academic Achievement. As previously stated, this study's conceptualization of achievement striving was focused not on actual achievement/performance but on the success-seeking attitude that drives one to achieve/perform. However, it has still

been common to find achievement and personality style to be related in the literature. Therefore, the potential of achievement to indicate prospective problematic elements in one's functioning is noteworthy. For example, Ziegler, Knogler, and Bühner (2009) noted that when predicting performance, "measures of personality, especially the Big Five, have proven to have incremental validity above and beyond general mental ability (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003; O'Connor & Paunonen, 2007)" (p. 288). The Big Five represent "five broad dimensions of personality…typically labeled as Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism (vs. Emotional Stability), and Openness to Experience (or Intellect)" (Paunonen & Ashton, 2001, p. 78). In support of Ziegler et al., (2009), Furnham and Chamorro-Premuzic (2004) argue that "intellectual ability refers to what a person *can* do, whereas personality traits may provide information on *what* a person *will* do" (p. 944). Ziegler et al. (2009) add that, "Within the Big Five, the trait conscientiousness seems to be the most important predictor above and beyond cognitive variables in explaining individual differences in school and academic performance (e.g., Paunonen & Ashton, 2001)" (p. 288).

Conscientiousness was defined by Norman (1963) "with trait descriptions (fussy, responsible, scrupulous, and persevering) [as] harboring both a responsibility and a morality element" (as cited in Moon, 2001, p. 534). Wright et al. (1995) found Conscientiousness to have an effect on the prediction of students' GPA (as cited by Ziegler et al., 2009). Beyond this, however, Lounsbury, Sundstrom, Loveland, and Gibson (2002) showed that "narrow personality traits can substantially enhance criterion-related validity," as opposed to broad personality traits (p. 75). Broad personality traits, such as Conscientiousness, are factor measures of personality (i.e., reflectors of Big Five personality factors). Narrow personality traits such as Achievement Striving are facet measures of personality (i.e., the variables that make up the Big Five factors) (Paunonen & Ashton, 2001, p. 80). In other words, the Lounsbury et al. (2002) evidence demonstrates the power of narrow traits to "…[predict] dependent variables of interest…" (Moon, 2001, p. 533), which suggests the use of facets

over broad traits when studying the influence of the Big Five on performance (Ziegler et al., 2009).

In the present study, there is an anticipated association between the Big Five trait of Conscientiousness and MSR personalities, due to the individual's strong motivation to perform well academically (O'Connor & Paunonen, 2007). In terms of its six scales, the Achievement Striving facet of the NEO PI-R's Conscientious domain scale is most emphasized for its relation with MSR individuals' consistent need for achievement and striving for excellence (Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991; as cited in Gray & Watson, 2002). Gray and Watson (2002) write that "Analyses of these lower order scales can further clarify the dispositional correlates of Conscientiousness" (p. 179). Furnham and Chamorro-Premuzic (2004) most notably view Conscientiousness and achievement striving as "beneficial for most types of performance because of their association with a number of behavioural tendencies (e.g., organization, persistence, drive, determination, responsibility) that enhance, as opposed to impair, academic or work performance" (p. 945). However, as Costa and McCrae's definition of achievement striving is only partially aligned with MSR, the MSR personality's vulnerability to external criticism is also suggested as a potential motivator of academic achievement, alongside Conscientiousness.

MSR individuals' tendencies toward maladaptive perfectionism could indicate consistent dissatisfaction with their academic achievements, which might exemplify their underlying personality dynamics. For instance, Blatt (1995) highlighted that "perfectionistic individuals experience depression that is focused primarily on issues of self-worth and self-criticism; they berate, criticize, and attack themselves, and experience intense feelings of guilt, shame, failure, and worthlessness" (p. 1012). This seemingly introjective depression could stem from maladaptive perfectionists' rare satisfaction with their performance. Blatt (1995), Grzegorek (2002), and Grzegorek, Slaney, Franze, and Rice (2004) agree that "Maladaptive perfectionists, given similar results in terms of achievement, felt less satisfied with these results than did adaptive perfectionists" (Grzegorek et al., 2004, p.

198). This high level of discrepancy between perceived and actual achievements is anticipated to be present in MSR personalities as a potential contributor to their self-criticism and feelings of inadequacy. Nonetheless, Slaney, Chadha, Mobley, and Kennedy (2000) found that, despite experiencing negative affectivity (e.g. guilt, self-criticism, shame), perfectionistic individuals would still be unwilling to give up their perfectionism, believing it was a contributor to their overall success (as cited in Grzegorek et al., 2004). Thus, it can be suggested that MSR individuals might not even be aware of the maladaptive effects of their personalities, particularly in everyday settings where their self-criticism might not be the presenting concern.

Achievement Striving as a Central Characteristic of MSR

In summary, a review of the current literature discussing the interrelatedness between achievement striving and the personalities accounted for by the MSR framework, as well as the overarching similarities across these relationships, both provide theoretical evidence for achievement striving as an observable characteristic that is part of the MSR structure. In turn, individuals with tendencies towards achievement striving often possess qualities theoretically similar to those characterized by high levels of MSR. At the empirical level, however, this relationship has yet to be formally assessed. Therefore, the need for further investigation into the empirical nature of this relationship is evident. In turn, this will highlight the way in which theory and research converge on the proposed overlap between MSR and achievement striving.

Future Directions

Ultimately, it is hypothesized that perfectionism, effortful control, impression-management, and academic achievement will be positively correlated with MSR, while relationship satisfaction will be negatively correlated. Findings in relation to this hypothesis would help support the validity and utility of the MSR construct, as well as provide a more reliable conceptualization of the personalities it characterizes.

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