

# Keeping Up With the Joneses

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We examined the influence of friends' and family members' perfectionism on students' life aspirations, as well as the role of life aspirations in students' well-being and self-regulation across the year as they pursued three personal goals. In a longitudinal study of 340 students and their friends and family members, we found that participants' friends' other-oriented perfectionism and self-oriented perfectionism was significantly positively related to participants' prioritization of extrinsic over intrinsic aspirations, while family members' perfectionism was not related to participants' aspirations. Furthermore, these effects were robust even after controlling for friends' levels of Big Five personality traits. Using a bootstrap resampling procedure for assessing mediation, we found that friends' prioritization of extrinsic aspirations partially mediated the negative relationship between friends' perfectionism and participants' orientation to intrinsic aspirations. However, there was an independent direct effect of friends' perfectionism on participants' aspirations.

We also found that intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations were differentially related to self-regulation strategies and the types of goals pursued. Prioritizing extrinsic aspirations was negatively associated with planned effort for goals, commitment to goals, and autonomous motivation, while it was positively associated with controlled motivation for goals (e.g., doing something because someone else wants you to, to avoid feelings of guilt, or to get something for it). Regarding goal content, prioritizing extrinsic aspirations was significantly associated with pursuing goals related to GPA, weight change, and career, and negatively associated with pursuing learning goals and goals related to giving back to the community. Lastly, we found that prioritization of extrinsic aspirations in September predicted decreased subjective well-being and autonomous motivation over the year, controlling for baseline well-being and motivation.

Overall, this investigation revealed a dark side of friends' other-oriented perfectionism, with an association between friends' other-oriented perfectionism and participants' increased prioritization of extrinsic aspirations, and increased prioritization of extrinsic aspirations predicting decreased well-being and volitional engagement with goals over time.

Nora H. Hope received the APSSC Student Research Award for this work. Visit the [McGill Human Motivation Lab website](#) to learn more about her research.

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