AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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in _____Psychology_____ presented on _____May 2, 2001_____

Title: Establishing Validity of the Student Personal Responsibility Scale

Abstract approved: _____Stephen J. Davis_____

The present study sought to establish validity of the Student Personal Responsibility

Scale (SPRS); (Singg & Ader, in press). The SPRS is a 20 question, 4-point Likert-type

survey used to assess how responsible a student perceives himself or herself to be in an

academic setting. The scores of the SPRS were compared with a parallel scale called the

Instructors' Perceptions of Student Responsibility (IPSR) to ascertain validity.

Participants were 206 undergraduate students from a medium-sized midwestern

university and 10 graduate teaching assistants from the Department of Psychology and

Special Education. Student participants were administered the SPRS. These same

students were evaluated by the graduate teaching assistants from the Department of

Psychology and Special Education using the IPSR. Pearson product moment correlation

indicated that students' scores on the SPRS were positively related with instructors'

evaluations of these same students on the IPSR ($p < .05$). Further analyses were

conducted using sex of the student as a filter variable, found a significant relation

between scores of SPRS and IPSR for women only ($p < .01$). These results establish the

validity of the SPRS. However, the relatively low, albeit significant, correlation for the

overall sample and the significant correlation for women only, suggests there are

additional factors yet to be accounted for.

ESTABLISHING VALIDITY OF THE STUDENT

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY SCALE

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A Thesis Proposal

Presented to

the Department of Psychology and Special Education

EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

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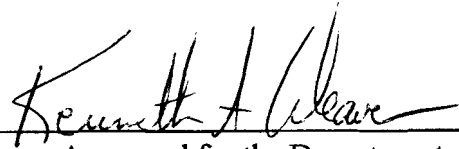In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

———————

by

Yolonda S. Jarman

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Approved for the Department of
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many researchers have discussed the topic of teaching students to be effective learners. Persons in the teaching profession continue to search for classroom skills that help students develop efficient styles or procedures of learning. Additionally, it seems that today's students do not hold themselves as accountable for poor academic performance as did their past counterparts (Gose, 1986). This apparent trend in students' behavior creates a great dilemma for educators trying to prepare students to be effective life-long learners.

As students gain increasing amounts of knowledge about individual disciplines offered in a college setting, they move beyond rote learning to learning that involves a deeper level processing; information processed at a deep level, is more likely to be retained (Corno, 1992). However, this deeper level of processing requires the student to become autonomous, or independent in his or her learning processes. Autonomous learning consists of such characteristics as, self-discipline, metacognitive awareness, responsibility, and persistence. Metacognition refers to beliefs and actions concerned with regulation and interpretation of a student's own cognitions (i.e., thoughts) (Gelder, 1997). If a student does not adopt these characteristics, the student is merely a passive receiver of information and does not obtain the full benefit of the college experience or become an effective consumer. In order to better understand the relation between academic performance and responsibility, the field of psychology has begun to research student responsibility.

Responsibility has many definitions and interchangeable terms. For the purpose of this research, academic responsibility is the concept of interest. Academic responsibility is defined as an overall tendency of a student to be self-reliant, dependable, conscientious, organized, self-caring, deliberate, fair, and cautious (Singg & Ader, in press). A student exhibiting academic responsibility would demonstrate behaviors such

as, completing assignments in a timely manner, attending class more days than not, reading assigned material, asking questions when material is unclear, etc. In order to successfully accomplish academic responsibility, a student would need to be acutely aware of his/her learning processes, study strategies, strengths and limitations (i.e., metacognition). Academic responsibility encompasses metacognition, therefore, "academic responsibility" will be used as a blanket term.

A review of the relevant literature reveals several theories proposed to explain what academic responsibility is and what it is comprised of. The following topics and theories are explored to help better understand academic responsibility and its influence on effective learning: (a) motivational factors, (b) learning orientations/styles, (c) self- worth theories, (d) social support theories, and (e) teacher expectancy effects/orientation.

Motivational Factors

Most individuals believe motivation lays at the foundation of academic performance (Elliot, McGregor, & Gable, 1999). To explain student responses to school and schoolwork, sociocognitive theorists target two classes of student processes: motivational (success expectations, and orientations towards schoolwork) and volitional processes (assuming responsibility for learning, regulating concentration, behavior and affect) (Corno, 1992). These characteristics manifest in behaviors such as expressing interest, getting right to work on tasks, and handling difficulties that arise which may influence academic success or failure.

According to Entwistle (as cited in Elliot et al., 1999), differing strategic approaches to studying further influence academic performance. Entwistle found three variables related to motivation and learning: deep processing, surface processing, and disorganization. Deep processing is defined as elaboration of material and involves challenging the veracity of information encountered and attempting to integrate new information with prior knowledge and experience (Elliot et al., 1999). Entwistle and

Ramsden (as cited in Elliot et al., 1999) define surface processing as processing in which

material is repeated and use of rote memorization techniques are used. Disorganization

refers to the learner's difficulty in establishing or maintaining a structured, organized

approach to studying (Elliot et al., 1999). Numerous studies have demonstrated that

mastery goals are positive predictors of deep processing, persistence and effort whereas

performance-avoidance goals are negative predictors of deep processing (Elliot et al.,

1999).

Learning Orientations/Styles

In addition to examining motivational factors, researchers have identified two

learning orientations: learning-oriented and performance/ego-oriented. Elliot et al. (1999)

hypothesize that each of the orientations leads to unique patterns of achievement-relevant

processes and outcomes.

Learning-oriented students tend to engage in more attentive behaviors, deeper processing

and more effective study strategies, and, as a result, they feel more confident about their

ability. Performance/ego-oriented students engage in less elaborative efforts, and have

feelings of inadequacy, possibly leading to withdrawal of effort and denial of

responsibility for failure (Corno, 1992). Learning-oriented or mastery students understand

their strengths, limitations and emotions related to learning and therefore are able to

better self-regulate or control these processes. These students are conscious of their

learning environments and make those environments work for them, rather than against

them (Corno, 1992). These students need little encouragement from outside sources to

complete school work. Mastery students are willing to engage problems, and use a

variety of coping strategies: breaking problems into parts, studying

previously-worked-out sample questions, searching the index of the text, skimming

certain pages or headings, rereading previous chapters or assignments to clarify

information, asking questions in class, and so forth (Ornstein, 1995). Students such as

these seem to have sufficient self-confidence about their ability to search out the answers to difficult problems and tasks.

Performance-avoidance goals are positively related to disorganization, grounded in fear of failure, and focused on the possibility of a negative outcome. These goals and behaviors interfere with attempts to engage in structured, focused study behavior (Elliot et al., 1999). Driven by feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem, some students become easily distracted, and avoid competing on an academic level. If given the choice between socializing with peers or studying for an exam, they will opt more often for the escape route (Ornstein, 1995). This behavior is a coping mechanism for negative experiences in school. They protect the ego by reducing effort, mismanaging study time, denying the need to study, and generally disengaging from schoolwork (Ornstein, 1995). These students are not self-regulated (metacognitively aware) and therefore take little responsibility for their learning, leaving the fate of their poor academic performance to outside forces or external control (Ornstein, 1995).

Mastery Learning Orientation/Styles.

Eison, Pollio, and Milton (1986) developed LOGO, a questionnaire to identify educational and personal characteristics of different types of learning styles. Their initial studies led them to classify college students into two categories: learning-oriented (LO) and grade-oriented (GO) (Eison et al., 1986). Learning-oriented students were more emotionally stable, trusting, imaginative, forthright, placid, self-sufficient, and relaxed. These students also had good study habits, less debilitating test anxiety, and higher collaborative and participative learning styles (Eison et al., 1986). Conversely, grade-oriented students tend to act in more conventional manner, take on a tough-minded and realistic approach to personal and social issues, and approach the world in a nonintuitive and relatively concrete way. Grade-oriented students also reported higher levels of test anxiety, attributed performance to external factors and had poor study skills despite their high level of concern for the grades received (Eison et al., 1986). When

viewed in terms of educational variables, learning-oriented students can be expected to impress instructors as intellectually and emotionally able, willing, interested, and having the most positive educational attitudes (Eison et al., 1986).

Self-Worth Theories

Theories of academic self-worth describe different motivations for poor performance. Self-worth theory states that in certain situations students stand to gain by not trying or by deliberately withholding effort. Such behaviors are likely to occur when poor performance imposes a threat to self-esteem (Thompson, Davidson, & Barber, 1995). When the student withdraws effort, the subsequent failure can then be explained as a of lack of effort rather than personal deficiencies and the students' self-esteem is protected. This research also suggests that such withdrawal behavior can be either conscious or unconscious (Thompson et al., 1995).

Whether or not the student withdraws effort, is related to self-efficacy appraisal. Self-efficacy appraisal is related to the learner's confidence or personal view of his or her abilities, and the tendency to attribute success to active engagement of learning (Ornstein, 1995). In other words, self-efficacy refers to a person's beliefs that he or she is capable of performing a certain task (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2000). Expectations of success breed success; in fact, it may be the ultimate source of students' motivation and formula for academic achievement (Ornstein, 1995). Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1990) assert that self-efficacy measures are credited with producing high correlations with students' actual achievement. Efficacy appraisal can determine how much time a student spends studying or how much effort is involved in learning according to these theories. Students who believe they can achieve will try harder and concentrate on difficult tasks longer than students who believe they cannot (Ornstein, 1995). Self-efficacy is also related to perceived control over the outcomes of life. Efficacious learners believe that outcomes are related to their actions (internal control) whereas nonefficacious learners believe that outcomes are influenced not by how they behave but rather how others

behave (external control) (Ornstein, 1995). Additionally, sex may influence how one attributes success or failure. For example, men are likely to attribute their poor performance to external, nonability-related factors such as task difficulty or bad luck to a greater degree than women (Thompson et al., 1995).

Social Support Theories

Gose (1986) asked teachers to complete a questionnaire comparing the characteristics of students from the 1960's with students from the 1980's. The results of the questionnaire found that teachers rated students from the 1960's as being more academically competent and students from the 1980's as more socially competent (Gose, 1986). This finding suggests that students of the 1980's moved away from academic performance to more social acceptance. Because the trend of being less academically talented and more peer-group oriented emerged, there is less motivation to learn and more motivation to socialize. However, this pattern may be a reflection of broader changes in society, not just the student subculture. Today's students seem more worldly; they are more aware of what is going on, know how institutions work, understand how to manage social relationships, can cope with adults, and can get things done in the community (Gose, 1986). According to Gose students may correctly perceive environmental changes and spend more time cultivating social skills that they realize are better guarantees of economic livelihood. However, this contention could be a gross generalization on the part of Gose, and may be a product of the types of individuals that participated in his research.

Motivation to attain academic success may even be influenced by the types of relationships students experience in the learning environment. A particular concern is that students who do not enjoy positive, supportive relationships with adults and peers are often at risk for academic problems (Wentzel, 1998). There is an increasing recognition among scholars that children's overall adjustment and success at school require a willingness as well as an ability to meet social as well as academic challenges (Hinshaw,

1992). Research with elementary and middle school students has documented significant relations of students' perceptions of support and caring from parents, teachers, and peers to positive aspects of motivation for academic success (Wentzel, 1998). Felner, Aber, Primavera, and Cauce (1985) found that perceived support from teachers is related to student reports of the pursuit of goals to behave prosocially and responsibly, educational aspirations and values, intrinsic values, and self-concept. This finding translates into the notion that students will be motivated to engage in classroom activities if they believe that teachers care about them (Wentzel, 1997).

There are two schools of thought related to why socially supportive relationships influence academic motivation. First, social relationships might be related to adjustment in academic settings because their supportive nature serves to alleviate or lessen the negative effects of stressful events of general levels of functioning (Wentzel, 1998). Second, socially supportive relationships may directly promote motivation and subsequent engagement in classroom activities which, in turn, bring about a sense of belongingness and support that is believed to lead to the adoption of socially valued goals and objectives (Wentzel, 1998). Several studies indicate that students expressing stronger beliefs in personal responsibility for their achievement successes and failures in relation to their classmates concomitantly express more positive feelings towards school and learning (Wolf, Chandler, & Spies, 1981).

Teacher Expectancy Effects/Orientations

Other explanations of the apparent lack of academic responsibility may be explained by examining the expectations and perceptions of teachers. Teachers' expectations of their students are related to students' subsequent achievement, even when teachers' expectations do not conform to students' prior performance (Carr & Kurtz-Costes, 1994). Additionally, these same expectations often lead to differential treatment of students in the classroom setting (Feldman, 2000). Expectations of this nature called teacher expectancy effects influence factors such as the warmth of the

classroom environment and how an instructor interacts with students. When teachers form expectations about a student's ability, these expectations are transmitted through a complex series of verbal and nonverbal cues. Students, in turn, accurately perceive a teacher's expectations of themselves and other students. These communicated expectations indicate to the student what behavior is appropriate, and the student behaves accordingly (Feldman, 2000). Babad, Bernieri, and Rosenthal (1991) found that students are keen observers of subtle nuances in verbal and nonverbal communication of teachers. These subtle 'messages' to students about their abilities influence not only their view of themselves, but also their classmates' expectations for their academic performance (Carr & Kurtz-Costes, 1994). Alvidrez and Weinstein (1999) found that teachers judged children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and children perceived as assertive and independent as being more academically able than IQ scores predicted; conversely, low socioeconomic backgrounds and perceived immaturity were associated with more negative teacher judgments about ability than IQ scores predicted. Often teachers rely heavily on achievement as the indicator of student motivation and other cognitive characteristics (Carr & Kurtz-Costes, 1994).

Additionally, Carr and Kurtz-Costes (1994) found that teachers' differential behavior is based not only on perceptions (or misconceptions) of students' cognitive abilities but also on inaccurate beliefs that teachers possess about the strength of the relation between achievement and motivational characteristics of the student. These perfect correlations between motivation and cognitive abilities do not exist and can lead to inaccurate perceptions of a student's ability. For example, some low achievers may possess a (falsely) positive view of their own abilities, and some students who are generally rich in metacognitive knowledge may attribute task outcomes primarily to external factors (Carr & Kurtz-Costes, 1994).

Accordingly, the orientation the teacher takes when teaching students may also influence academic motivation and success. Kourilsky and Keislar (1983) found that

teachers with high success orientations toward teaching had students showing larger gains on perceived personal control of their own academic success and failure and had more favorable attitudes toward learning than did students taught by teachers who were oriented toward avoidance of failure in their teaching. High success orientation is a function of a teacher's achievement motivation, hope for success in different teaching situations, and perceived personal control (Kourilsky & Keislar, 1983). Teachers with success orientations reported having more perceived personal control over situations (internal locus of control), confidence, and less fear of failure. One suggestion for this finding is that success oriented teachers also report less anxiety and allowed less structure in classrooms to let students to make more decisions on their own (Kourilsky & Keislar, 1983). Students who come to believe or accept that the locus of responsibility for attention, reinforcement, and, ultimately, success and failure is internal rather than external will be more likely to approach academic tasks with a sense of agency (Thomas, 1980). Agency is defined as the action or power to exhibit "metacognitive behaviors." To think about thinking, and decide for themselves how, where, and when, students need to store and retrieve information to achieve a variety of goals (Thomas, 1980). More anxious teachers may not be comfortable with an unstructured environment and therefore may intervene more, possibly interfering with student growth in perceived personal control (Kourilsky & Keislar, 1983). Another possible explanation is that success oriented teachers may act as role models to students, modeling effective and responsible academic behaviors. By acting in accord with their success orientation, taking responsibility or blame for their successes or failures in discipline, recreation, or learning, the teachers may provide an implicit curriculum from which students learn (Kourilsky & Keislar, 1983).

Validity

Validity is defined as the extent to which a test or inventory measures what it is supposed to measure (Smith & Davis, 1997). It is important to establish the validity of an

instrument to guarantee the instrument measures the information a researcher is interested in. For example, if a researcher is interested in reading ability, he or she would want the instrument in question to accurately measure factors related to reading and not mathematical ability. In research there are many types of validity, each of which is a different measure of how accurately an instrument measures what it is intended to measure.

An instrument is said to possess content validity if the items on the test address an adequate, representative sample of the material the instrument was designed to cover (Janda, 1998). A final exam in a psychology course would have content validity if the items addressed the material covered in the textbook. One way to build content validity into an instrument is to create specifications that identify the content areas to be covered, the instructional objectives of the educational experience, and the relative importance of each (Janda, 1998).

Another type of validity is criterion validity, or the ability of the instrument to predict the outcome or criterion (Smith & Davis, 1997). The underlying objective of SATs and ACTs is to try and predict how a student will perform in college by examining his or her performance on one of these instruments. Criterion validity refers to a statistical relation between test scores and criterion scores and can be represented by a statistic, such as a correlation coefficient (Janda, 1998).

Additionally, researchers are interested in concurrent validity. Concurrent validity refers to the degree to which the score on one instrument corresponds with another measure of the designated trait (Smith & Davis, 1997). When an instrument is found to have concurrent validity, the test becomes a more efficient way of gathering information than other existing methods (Janda, 1998). For example, if a psychologist wants to determine if a client is depressed, and there is an instrument with established concurrent validity, the psychologist can administer the instrument rather than have the client undergo a psychiatric interview.

Many of the characteristics measured using instruments are hypothetical constructs - ideas about characteristics or traits, which have been developed to make individual differences in human behavior more understandable, such as intelligence. These constructs cannot be directly observed; rather are inferred from observations of behaviors that are believed to reflect the construct (Janda, 1998). When researchers are developing an instrument to measure a construct like intelligence, the instrument is examined to determine if it possesses construct validity. Construct validity is the extent to which a test is successful in measuring a hypothetical construct (Janda, 1998). To establish if an instrument contains construct validity, the instrument is usually correlated with other tests known to accurately measure the relevant behavior related to the construct. For example, if a researcher wanted to develop a new test of intelligence, he or she would correlate it with an established instrument that is known to measure behaviors related with intelligence. Testing instruments are designed to assess specific attributes of human behavior, therefore a researcher wants an instrument to be valid, or accurately measure the attribute it is intended to measure.

In conclusion, the apparent lack of academic responsibility from today's students could be influenced by many factors. Many theorists take a motivational perspective, suggesting that students have inadequate motivational processes to keep their interest in academic work. Other theorists take a psychosocial perspective, suggesting that low self-esteem, lack of supportive relationships or investing more interest in peer relations may be the culprit for lack of academic responsibility.

Rationale For The Present Research

This study explores the accuracy of students' perceptions of their own academic responsibility by comparing the students' responses with instructors' perceptions of these same students' responsibility. In making such a comparison, insight will be gained into the students' metacognitive processes and how to better prepare them to become more effective and responsible learners. Because lack of personal responsibility is considered

one of the main causes of American school failure (Singg & Ader, in press), the information provided by this research has the potential to help correct this detrimental situation. Singg and Ader (in press) developed the Student Personal Responsibility Scale (SPRS) to measure student responsibility. By comparing student SPRS scores with instructor evaluations of the same students' responsibility, the present study will provide empirical validation of the SPRS.

Several hypotheses guided this project:

Hypothesis 1: Students' self-perceived responsibility scores will correlate significantly and positively with instructors' responsibility evaluations of these same students. If the SPRS measures academic responsibility, then it is expected to correlate with others' assessments of these same students' academic responsibility, demonstrating the validity of the SPRS.

Hypothesis 2: Men and women will not differ in level of self-reported responsibility. Students at the college level are expected to have a sophisticated knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses in a classroom setting (metacognition), understand the relation between these characteristics and personal performance in class, and therefore, have the ability to accurately rate their level of academic responsibility.

Hypothesis 3: Instructors evaluations of student responsibility will not differ according to sex of participant. Instructors are expected to be objective in their assessments of academic responsibility regardless of sex of the students or relationship with the students.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

The primary purpose of the present study was to demonstrate the validity of the Student Personal Responsibility Scale (SPRS); (Singg & Ader, in press). The SPRS consists of questions to ascertain the level of student self-report of responsibility in a learning environment.

Participants

This study used 276 college men and women from undergraduate psychology courses at a medium-sized, Midwestern state university as participants. The students voluntarily participated and received partial credit for fulfilling course requirements. The mean age was 19.92 (SD = 4.18). Of the 276 participants, there were 63 men (23%) and 213 women (77%), 39% were freshmen, 6% were sophomores, 8% were juniors, and 5% were seniors, with 42% who did not report academic classification. The majority of participants were unmarried (53%), with 4% being married, 1% divorced, and 42% who did not report marital status. No racial or ethnic data were obtained at this time. Of the original 276, only data from 206 participants were used for correlational analyses due to missing information. Additionally, 10 graduate teaching assistants from the Department of Psychology and Special Education independently rated the responsibility of the 206 participating students. Nine of the 10 graduate teaching assistants were women.

Materials

Demographic sheet. The demographic sheet consisted of questions that included information about age, sex, academic classification, Greek membership, and marital status of the participants. The last four digits of each participants' social security number were used as a participant code to ensure confidentiality. All data were confidential.

Student Personal Responsibility Scale (SPRS). The Student Personal Responsibility Scale (SPRS) (Singg & Ader, in press) is comprised of 20 Likert-type questions (1 = Never, 4 = Always). The SPRS assesses how responsible a student

perceives himself or herself in a variety of academic-related behaviors. An example of an SPRS item is: "I turn in assignments in a timely manner." The SPRS produces a single composite score. Those individuals who score high on the SPRS are thought to be more academically responsible, whereas, those individuals who score low on the SPRS are thought to be less academically responsible.

Instructors' Perceptions of Student Responsibility Scale (IPSR). The Instructors' Perceptions of Student Responsibility Scale (IPSR) is comprised of 20 Likert-type questions (1 = Never, 4 = Always) that parallel the SPRS questions. The IPSR asks instructors to rate how responsible they perceive their students to be in class. Instructors who perceive students as more academically responsible will rate these students higher (i.e., have a higher composite score on the IPSR). If the instructor perceives the students as having less academic responsibility, they will rate these students lower (i.e., have a lower composite score on the IPSR).

Procedure

Students volunteered to participate in the study by signing a sheet that was placed on the Department of Psychology and Special Education research bulletin board. The participants received a reminder telephone call the night prior to scheduled testing times.

As participants arrived at a reserved classroom during scheduled sessions, the researcher distributed the SPRS questionnaire (Appendix A), an informed consent document (see Appendix B), and the demographic information sheet (see Appendix C). Participants read, signed and, returned the informed consent form, and completed the demographics information sheet before completing the SPRS questionnaire.

After all participants read and signed the informed consent sheet, the participants, as a group, completed the SPRS. I provided verbal and written instructions to the participants. To ensure confidentiality, the participants wrote only the last four digits of their social security number and instructor's name on the response sheet. Although

participants responded to the questionnaire at their own pace, the entire process did not exceed 20 min to complete.

Instructors rated the student participants from their classes using the IPSR (Appendix D). Using the last four digits of the students' social security numbers, the instructors had access to the identity of the participants for the purposes of rating the responsibility of these students. Instructors received written instructions and included only the last four digits of the students' social security number and their instructor's identification code (assigned to them by the researcher and included with the instructions) on the IPSR response sheet (Appendix D). Instructors completed the questionnaires on their own time, within a 2-week period.

Each participant's and instructor's responses were scored by hand. The raw scores and demographic information of the participants were entered into an SPSS data file for correlational analysis.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Participants completed the SPRS questionnaire in group testing sessions. Additionally, instructors completed the IPSR questionnaires to evaluate how responsible students were in class for purposes of establishing the validity of the SPRS. The results were analyzed by SPSS for Windows software. An alpha level of .05 was used for all analyses to ascertain significance.

General Demographic Comparisons

Correlations for the overall sample analyzed were not significant (all $ps > .05$).

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Responsibility of the SPRS and IPSR

Validity of the SPRS was assessed by calculating Pearson correlation coefficients between the composite scores of the SPRS with the composite scores of the IPRS questionnaires. Pearson product moment correlation indicated that students' scores on the SPRS were positively related, $r = .17$, $p < .01$, with scores of the IPSR. This result established the validity of the SPRS and supported Hypothesis 1. This correlation, albeit significant, is rather small and suggests that additional factors (motivation to achieve, interest in class material, etc.) are yet to be accounted for. Table 1 summarizes the results of this analysis.

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Responsibility of the Men

Separate correlation analyses were conducted for men and women, using sex as a filter variable (See Table 1). For men, Pearson product moment correlation indicated a significant, negative relation for scores on the SPRS and age of the participant, $r = -24$, $p < .05$. This finding does not support Hypothesis 2. These data suggest a relation between age of the male participants and how responsible these male participants perceive themselves to be. It is possible that the younger, male students are over-confident of their actual abilities, and therefore inflate their scores on the SPRS. All other correlations were nonsignificant; however intersting trends were noted. For scores

Table 1

<u>Summary of Correlation Coefficients (whole sample)</u>

	IPSR	AGE	AC	MS
SPRS	.17**	-.06	-.03	-.11
IPSR	---	-.10	-.07	-.08

<u>Note.</u> AC = Academic Classification, MS = Marital Status.
** p <.01

<u>Summary of Correlation Coefficients for Men</u>

	IPSR	AGE	AC
SPRS	-.10	-.24*	-.20
IPRS	---	-.15	-.08

<u>Note.</u> AC = Academic Classification, MS = Marital Status.
*p < .05

<u>Summary of Correlation Coefficients for Women</u>

	IPSR	AGE	AC
SPRS	.29**	.06	-.02
IPSR	---	-.08	-.07

<u>Note.</u> AC = Academic Classification, MS = Marital Status.
** p <.01

on the IPSR and SPRS, a negative, but not significant, correlation was found ($r = -.10$).
Additionally, negative, but not significant, correlations were found for scores on the
SPRS and academic classification ($r = -.20$). Again, younger, male students may have an
inflated perception of their academic responsibility and this perception is being reflected
via self-reported scores on the SPRS. IPSR scores, age, and academic classification were
also negatively, but not significantly, correlated ($r = -.15$, and $r = -.07$, respectively).
Because these results are not significant, Hypothesis 3 is supported; however, these
trends suggest that instructors may perceive older, male students as less responsible. This
result may be explained by expectations that instructors have about older students. The
participants for this study were from beginning courses in Psychology, courses that older
students should have already taken and passed. It is possible that the sample of older,
male students in this study were those students who had failed to acquire a passing grade
in these general education courses previously and were attempting to complete the
courses successfully for a second time. This fact may influence an instructor's perception
of these students' level of responsibility and account for the negative, yet insignificant,
trend between IPSR scores, academic classification, and age.

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Women

For women, Pearson product moment correlation indicated a significant, positive
relation for scores on the SPRS and IPSR, $r = .29$, $p < .01$. This result supports
Hypothesis 1 and represents a stronger relation than that reported for the overall sample;
the negative relation of these two variables shown by the men tended to offset the
positive relation shown by the women. Although all other correlations were
nonsignificant, interesting trends were found. Scores on the SPRS were positively related
with age ($r = .06$). Again, because this is an insignificant finding, Hypothesis 2 is
supported. This trend may lead to other conclusions with future research using equal, and
representative groups of men and women. Additionally, negative, but not significant,
correlations were found for SPRS and academic classification, and for IPSR, age, and

academic classification ($r = -.02$, $r = -.08$, and $r = -.07$, respectively). Again, these results may be a reflection of younger students overestimating their abilities and inflating their scores. Also, instructors' expectations for students who are older may be influenced by age and academic classification, rating students who are older or who are completing the course for a second or third time as less responsible due to their inability or resistance to successfully completing courses the first time. This finding is not significantly influenced by sex of the participant, therefore, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Analysis of Variance

Because separate correlation coefficients did not allow for direct comparison of the responses and evaluations of male and female participants, a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to analyze main effects and interaction of sex of the participant (male, female) and rater source of the surveys (self, instructor). The composite scores of the SPRS and IPSR were collapsed into a single dependent variable called "survey scores." Sex of the participant, rater source of the surveys, and the interaction (sex * rater) were all nonsignificant factors ($p > .05$). Hypotheses 2 and 3 were supported by these data. Table 2 summarizes the results of this analysis.

Table 2

Analysis of Variance

Dependent Variable: Survey Scores

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
SEX	83.69	1	83.69	1.18
RATER	.52	1	.52	.01
SEX*RATER	6.44	1	6.44	.09
Error	28233.70	398	70.94	
Total	537931.00	402		

(all p_s > .05)

(r^2 = .003)

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CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 stated that composite scores of the Students' Personal Responsibility Scale would positively correlate with scores from the Instructor's Perceptions of Students' Responsibility. The findings only partially support Hypothesis 1; participants' self-reported scores on the SPRS demonstrated a positive, and significant, correlation with instructors' evaluations of student responsibility on the IPRS.

However, in conducting separate analyses for men and women, scores on the SPRS and IPSR were positively, and significantly, correlated for female ($r = .29$, $p < .01$) but not male participants. This finding suggests that female students may be more cognitively aware of their motivational and volitional strategies used in a learning environment than male students. Alternatively, it is possible that women are better able to accurately assess their level of academic responsibility than are men. Both of these suppositions are implied in the findings of Ablard and Lipschultz (1998), and Thorkildesen and Nicholls (1998). Another possible explanation for these findings is that women are attributed with better communication skills (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2000). These female students may be better at communicating their academic needs to their instructors, thereby influencing perceived academic responsibility.

Many other factors could play a significant role in determining this relatively low correlation. For example, measuring academic responsibility does not necessarily measure student interest in the course material. It is plausible that students' self-evaluations and the instructors' evaluations reflect a perception of disinterest in the course material due to these participants being recruited from a general education class. Students may take a more dispassionate attitude towards learning due to the class being a general education requirement. Another possibility is that instructors may have an apathetic perception about the quality of the students in general education courses and

may lower their expectations of students because they appear not to have an invested interest in the course material.

Additionally, instructors' methods of teaching could not be controlled for and could have an impact on the relation of students' self-reported responsibility and instructors' perceptions of responsibility of these students. One supposition of this effect is that the method of instruction may influence amount of responsibility exerted by students. For example, instructors who use a lecture method of teaching may encourage students to initiate little responsibility for learning in class because the information is given to them through lecture notes or textbook material. There is little need in this learning environment for utilization of metacognitive skills or study strategies to induce better learning. Another supposition is that instructors who make themselves more available outside of the classroom may view students who seek out their help as more responsible, hence, reinforcing a student to seek out help and influencing these students' sense of responsibility.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated that self-reported scores of responsibility on the SPRS would not differ between men and women. The nonsignificant male-female difference supported this hypothesis. However, supportive trends were noted and further research may find differing results. Because there was such a large number of women participants, it is likely that men were not accurately represented in this sample. Further studies that use equal samples of men and women may find that scores do differ depending on sex of the individual. Ablard and Lipschultz (1998) found that self-regulated learning strategies (or academic responsibility) were significantly related to sex. They found that girls reported greater use of self-regulated strategies (organizing and transforming information into understood concepts, providing rewards and punishments based on performance, reviewing notes, seeking help, etc.) than did boys. Additionally, Thorkildesen and Nicholls (1998) found that motivational orientations differed between boys and girls. It

seems likely that girls, more often than boys, might take a motivational strategy that aims to avoid failure or to please the teacher. Girls may be preoccupied with failure and highly sensitive to negative feedback. This supposition is supported by self-worth theories in which students may gain by not putting forth effort to protect their self-esteem.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 stated that instructors' evaluations of student responsibility would not differ according to sex of the participant. The findings did not support Hypothesis 3; there were differences found in instructors' evaluations of male ($r = -.10$, $p > .05$) and female ($r = .29$, $p < .01$) students. This finding could have been influenced by the fact that the majority of the participants and instructors were women. There could be a relation between sex of the participants and sex of the instructors. Perhaps women are better at communicating their perceptions of academic responsibility, therefore leading to better congruence of scores on the SPRS and IPSR. Future studies using equal samples of male and female participants and instructors may reach different conclusions as proposed by Sullivan and Reno (1999).

Research conducted by Sullivan and Reno (1999) found that individuals could accurately assess others' abilities and contributions to a group process, regardless of liking specific individuals. Taken together with the level of correspondence between peer ratings of ability (subjective ratings) and objective measures of this same ability (quiz scores over class material), individuals were indeed able to provide accurate ratings of ability and responsibility (Sullivan & Reno, 1999). In other words, instructors may possess the ability to accurately rate the responsibility levels of students regardless of sex or liking of specific individuals, by combining information gathered by corresponding with students, with performance measures on exams and quizzes.

There were also findings that suggest that younger, male students tend to report higher levels of academic responsibility on the SPRS ($r = -.24$, $p < .05$). Accordingly,

past research does suggest that men in their first year of college are more apt to view themselves as above average on several spheres relevant to academic success (Feldman, 2000). However, these results must be interpreted with caution due to the small number of male students included in this study. These results could be a reflection of a particular type of male student who volunteered to participate in this study. It is possible that these particular male students are more academically inclined, and therefore were more interested in participation in this study as it relates to their personal success in the classroom environment. In other words, these male students may be particularly success oriented, and participation in research outside of class is required for success in class.

Conclusions and Future Directions

As an assessment of student responsibility, the SPRS was found to measure some aspects of this concept. However, it is prudent to interpret results of self-report instruments with caution, as they are a reflection of an individual's perception of a situation and may not reflect the true reality of a situation. Additionally, the results of this study, albeit significant, were small, suggesting that further research and refining is needed to make the SPRS an invaluable measure of academic responsibility. Many factors could have influenced the outcome of this research, particularly factors related to the possible over-representation of female students in this study.

Other research suggests possible links between personality traits and academic responsibility. Hilsman and Garber (1995) found that students who reported a negative explanatory style or lack of academic control and competence expressed more distress after receiving unacceptable grades than did students without such cognitions. Additionally, the intensity of the distress was found to be influenced by attributional styles of the students (Hilsman & Garber, 1995). When people experience a negative event, people who attribute the causes of negative events to stable, global, and internal factors are more likely to become depressed than are individuals who do not have such a negative explanatory style (Weiner, 1985). For example, a student who attributes failure

on an exam as a result of lack of intelligence on his or her part would experience more distress than a student who attributed the failure to not studying the material adequately. The latter attribution can be changed through better study techniques, seeking a tutor, and utilizing more of the student's time outside of class for understanding the material (changeable, specific, and external). Because the current study did not specifically identify personality traits as they relate to a student's perception of academic responsibility, future research in this area would be beneficial and interesting.

In related research, Phillips and Gully (1997) found that ability, learning goal orientation, and locus of control were positively related to self-efficacy, whereas performance goal orientation was negatively related to self-efficacy on an academic task. Individuals with higher learning goal orientations are more likely to have higher self-efficacy than individuals lower in learning goal orientation. In other words, individuals who possess a high learning goal orientation believe their abilities to be malleable or changeable and therefore approach tasks with the intention of developing their skills and abilities (Phillips & Gully, 1997). Additionally, individuals with this learning orientation are more likely to interpret a past experience, even if it is a failure, as something positive from which they can learn, and therefore will not withdraw effort as a way to protect their self-esteem (Phillips & Gully, 1997). The SPRS and IPSR do not account for learning motivations. They should be compared with instruments that measure learning motivation, such as the LOGO developed by Eison, Pollio, and Milton (1986) in order to further validate the SPRS and analyze additional factors that may influence academic responsibility.

Additionally, it seems that people are more likely to attribute successes as being more stable and controllable than failures, and are willing to take more responsibility for successes than for failures (McAllister, 1996). One explanation for this finding is that the perception of stability is related to expectations of future performance, with present successes to be more predictive of future success than of failure (McAllister, 1996).

Teachers also demonstrate this self-serving bias in the classroom. Prawat et al. (1983) found that teachers feel more responsible for student successes when student ability is low and effort is high; the accompanying feelings of teacher pride and satisfaction, are linked to internal attributions for success, and expressed outwardly to these students as praise. This outward praise could then influence the feelings of self-efficacy of a student and increase academic responsibility. This situation being true, academic responsibility may not be accurately reflected by simple self-report questionnaires taken out of the context of the actual classroom. Therefore, further research to better understand academic responsibility may want to control for this apparent trend of shirking responsibility when failure is involved by both students and teachers.

A number of studies continue to support the idea that favorable classroom factors directly influence academic responsibility reported by students. Wentzel (1997) found that perceived caring from teachers predicted motivational outcomes, even when students' current levels of psychological distress, beliefs about personal control, and previous motivation and performance were taken into account. Perceptions of caring teachers (those who are described as demonstrating democratic interaction styles, developing expectations for student behavior in light of individual differences, modeled a "caring" attitude toward their own work, and providing constructive feedback) were related to students' academic efforts and to their pursuit of prosocial and social responsibility (Wentzel, 1997). Wolf et al. (1981) found similar results about classroom factors. In their study, students were more likely to accept responsibility for their school successes and failures when they felt favorably about school. Future research for understanding academic responsibility obviously needs to include classroom and teacher influences. The SPRS does not account for student perceptions of how supportive their learning environment and instructors are, and could be missing an important influence on academic responsibility because of this.

The SPRS does touch on some of the factors that influence academic responsibility and has much potential. Uses for such a measure are numerous. If the SPRS is refined and further validated, an instructor could easily use this instrument to determine at-risk students and immediately implement educational interventions. Additionally, understanding what factors influence academic responsibility can help educators develop more successful learning environments and teach students to be effective learners. With advancing knowledge in the arena of academic responsibility as it relates to academic success, educators can combat school failure and prepare future generations for a lifetime of learning.

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Appendix A: SPRS

Appendix A: Student Personal Responsibility Scale (SPRS)

STUDENT PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY SCALE (SPRS)

The following statements concern behavior in everyday life situations. There are no right or wrong answers. Please place a check under the response category that most accurately describes your behavior the majority of the time.

	Most always like me 1	Somewhat like me 2	Very little like me 3	Mostly never like me 4
1. I leave my things all over the place. (clothes, books, dishes, etc.)	____	____	____	____
2. I pay my monthly installments on my debts on time every month.	____	____	____	____
3. When I borrow some-thing I fail to return it.(☞)	____	____	____	____
4. I turn all my assignments in on time.	____	____	____	____
5. At home or at college I do my fair share of the household chores.	____	____	____	____
6. I overeat and/or drink too much.(☞)	____	____	____	____
7. I see the dentist or doctor for regular check ups.	____	____	____	____
8. I blame others when I feel down.(☞)	____	____	____	____
9. I own up to my mistakes and apologize for them.	____	____	____	____
10. I miss class often. (☞)	____	____	____	____
11. I seldom exercise my right to vote.(☞)	____	____	____	____
12. I send a thank you note after receiving a gift from someone.	____	____	____	____
13. I am often late for class or work.(☞)	____	____	____	____
14. At a restaurant I pay my fair share of the bill.	____	____	____	____
15. I miss appointments I have made if I'd rather not go.(☞)	____	____	____	____
16. When I promise to help with a project, I follow through.	____	____	____	____

(R) 1.

(R) 6.

(R) 8.

(R) 10.

(R) 11.

(R) 13.

(R) 15.

Appendix A: Student Personal Responsibility Scale (SPRS)

SPRS continued

	Most always like me 1	Somewhat like me 2	Very little like me 3	Mostly never like me 4
(R) 17. If it means giving up some personal pleasures, I delay studying. ✏	____	____	____	____
18. I assess my budget before making a purchase to make sure I can pay for it.	____	____	____	____
(R) 19. When provoked, I lose control of my temper. ✏	____	____	____	____
(R) 20. When I do poorly in school, I blame my teachers rather than accepting my lack of effort. ✏	____	____	____	____

Reverse scoring of items with ✏

Alpha coefficient = .77 ($N = 281$)

Alpha coefficient = .76 ($N = 52$); eight-week test-retest reliability = .74 ($N = 52$)

Appendix B: Informed Consent Document

Appendix B: Informed Consent Document

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

The Department of Psychology and Special Education at Emporia State University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research and related activities. The following information is provided so that you can decided whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, and that if you do withdraw from the study, you will not be subjected to reprimand or any other form of reproach.

You are asked to complete a demographics information sheet and a 20 question survey that measures aspects of academic responsibility. It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete both questionnaires.

"I have read the above statement and have been fully advised of the procedures to be sued in this project. I have been given sufficient opportunity to ask any questions I had concerning the procedures and possible risks involved. I understand the potential risks involved and I assume them voluntarily. I likewise understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without being subjected to reproach."

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

Appendix C: Demographic Sheet

Appendix C: Demographic Sheet

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Student ID (last 4 digits of Social Security #) _____

Sex _____   Age _____

Greek Affiliation :   Yes _____   No _____

Academic Classification **(Circle one)**

Freshman   Sophomore   Junior   Senior

Marital Status **(Circle one)**

Single   Married   Separated   Divorced

Instructor's Name _____ Course #/Section _____

Appendix D: IPSR

Appendix D: Instructors' Perceptions of Student Responsibility (IPSR)

IPSR

Student ID# _____

The following statements concern students' behavior in classroom situations. There are no right or wrong answers. Please place a check under the response that most accurately describes the above student's behavior the majority of the time.

	Always 1	Sometimes 2	Very Little 3	Never 4
1. Student leaves his/her things all over the classroom. (Books, papers, jackets, etc.)	____	____	____	____
2. Student turns in assignments on time.	____	____	____	____
3. When student borrows something, he/she fails to return it.	____	____	____	____
4. When student schedules appointments, he/she arrives on time.	____	____	____	____
5. Student completes his/her share of the assignment in group projects.	____	____	____	____
6. Student takes notes in class and is attentive during lecture/class discussion, etc.	____	____	____	____
7. Student asks questions when unclear about assignments, goals, grades, etc.	____	____	____	____
8. Student blames others when he/she feels down.	____	____	____	____
9. Student owns up to his/her mistakes and apologizes for them.	____	____	____	____
10. Student misses class often.	____	____	____	____
11. Student seldom participates in class.	____	____	____	____
12. Student shows appreciation after receiving help.	____	____	____	____
13. Student is often late for class.	____	____	____	____
14. Student keeps assignments or appointments in a planner so not to forget them.	____	____	____	____
15. Student regularly misses appointments.	____	____	____	____
16. Student follows through when he/she has made a commitment to help with a project.	____	____	____	____

Appendix D: Instructors' Perceptions of Student Responsibility (IPSR)

IPSR continued

17. Student delays studying if it interferes
    with personal pleasures.   _____   _____   _____   _____

18. Student is aware of strengths and weaknesses
    and actively works on self improvement.   _____   _____   _____   _____

19. When provoked, student loses control of
    his/her temper.   _____   _____   _____   _____

20. When student does poorly in class, he/she
    blames the instructors, rather than accepting
    his/her lack of effort.   _____   _____   _____   _____

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Date

Establishing Validity of the Student Personal Responsibility Scale
Title of Thesis

_____
Signature of Graduate Office Staff Member

August 6, 2001