PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY: THE CREATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF A SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAM

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May 10, 2007

KEYWORDS

ABSTRACT

We live in a society where the individual is prioritised over the collective. Newspaper articles abound lamenting adolescents' lack of personal responsibility and social commentators are increasingly highlighting the need to recapture and interweave an agenda of personal responsibility into the social fabric. Personal responsibility has been defined as being accountable to oneself and the needs and well-being of others (Ruyter, 2002). Doherty (1998) has argued that there is an increasing trend in society to refuse accountability and to blame others for one's situation. Despite these assertions, there is little empirical research that has attempted to define and examine personal responsibility.

This dissertation is about the role of personal responsibility in the lives of adolescents. The research program was divided into three studies utilising quantitative and qualitative research methods to answer four research questions.

Study 1

1. How do adolescents and teachers understand "personal responsibility?"

Study 2

2. Can a quantitative questionnaire define and measure an adolescent's level of personal responsibility?

Study 3

3. Can a program aimed at enhancing the personal responsibility level of adolescents be taught in a high school and demonstrate measurable effect?

4. Is there a relationship between personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem?

Study 1 used focus groups to address research question 1. Four focus groups with a total of 20 Year 11 students, and two focus groups with a total of 10 teachers were conducted. The results revealed that key components of the personal responsibility variable were choices and consequences, behavioural control, thoughts and feelings, and consideration for others. This finding complemented the definition derived from the literature review. Additionally, the focus group data served to inform Study 2, the development of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire and Study 3, the creation, implementation and evaluation of the Personal Responsibility Program.

Study 2 involved examining appropriate literature, focus group data from Study 1, and related measures to create a quantitative measure assessing personal responsibility in adolescents. A 100-item measure was created and tested on more than 500 adolescents. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were used to determine a final 30-item Personal Responsibility Questionnaire with two factors (factor 1 - "self control of emotion and thoughts" and factor 2 - "self control of behaviour"). This measure was to serve in the evaluation of the Personal Responsibility Program.

A fundamental aim of the study was to determine whether a Personal Responsibility Program could be implemented in a high school and demonstrate measurable effect. Study 3 involved the creation of the Personal Responsibility Program through examining other values-based education programs and the focus group data obtained in Study 1. Once created, the five-lesson program was implemented twice in one high school, with approximately half of the Year 11

students undertaking the first implementation (the experimental group), and the remaining Year 11 students completing the program during its second implementation (the control group).

To assess whether the program had generated any changes in the adolescents' levels of personal responsibility, the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire developed in Study 2 was administered pre- and post-intervention to both the experimental and control groups. Additionally, the well-established constructs of emotional intelligence and self-esteem were assessed using the Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) to determine potential relationships between these variables and to provide additional construct validity for the measure.

The results from Study 3 revealed no significant findings on any variable at any time (pre- or post-intervention). Despite this finding, certain data trends were apparent between males and females across the experimental and control groups. Overall, females demonstrated slightly higher mean scores on emotional intelligence and personal responsibility than males, while males had slightly higher mean scores than females on self-esteem.

In order to gather additional feedback about the program and the students' learning, qualitative data were gathered from the students and the teachers by completion of a feedback sheet at the end of each lesson and a teacher focus group interview after the first implementation of the Personal Responsibility Program. In relation to student learning, the qualitative data offered by the students showed that learning in

the key areas targeted had occurred, with students reflecting on their growth and changing understandings about personal responsibility. With reference to the program, the students commented that the program was fun, interesting, relevant, valuable, and enabled them to learn new things about themselves. Feedback from the teachers highlighted that the students appeared to engage with the program, and that teaching it was rewarding.

This research program has contributed to the literature by providing a theoretically and empirically derived definition of personal responsibility. The focus group process highlighted that personal responsibility could be understood and considered by adolescents due to the cognitive and moral sophistication that develops early in this developmental timeframe. Study 2 generated a Personal Responsibility Questionnaire that can be used to assess personal responsibility in adolescents, and Study 3 contributed a Personal Responsibility Program which has been developed from conceptual and empirical literature. The program was designed to be "teacher friendly" and allowed the schools to gather qualitative and quantitative feedback on the success of the program's implementation. As school administrators and teachers often lament the lack of personal responsibility in their students (Lickona, 1992), this program could be used to address this concern and put the issue of personal responsibility firmly on the agenda in high schools.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my primary supervisor, Professor Wendy Patton. Every time I walked out of Wendy's office I felt recharged, excited and valued. The journey of a PhD is a million steps, and Wendy was there to support me through every one of them. Her warmth, openness, humour and intelligence were deeply appreciated. Thank you Wendy.

I would also like to thank my associate supervisors, Dr Fiona Spencer and Dr Rebecca Spooner-Lane. Both provided valuable statistical assistance and an abundance of warmth and support. Thank you both for the coffees and the laughs.

Very importantly, I would like to thank the staff and students of the high schools involved in this research program. I was incredibly well supported by both schools and I believe this is predominantly why the PhD came together so easily. I cannot express the depth of my gratitude in words. Thank you all for supporting my vision and me.

Much gratitude goes out to Dr Jenny Campbell, Dr John Whitta, Mr Col McCowan, Dr John Clarke, and my Auntie, Mrs Anna Laird, who provided specialised assistance and feedback along the way. The PhD is all the better for your input.

My sincere appreciation goes out to my mentor and friend Ms Michelle Kerr. Michelle listened to me talk for months about how I wanted to teach personal responsibility to adolescents, and how I might like to do a PhD. It was Michelle who suggested I combine the two desires and who convinced me that I could. Michelle, your support at the very beginning gave me the courage to apply. You helped change my life. Thank you.

I would also like to thank my friends who have supported me during the ups and downs of the last three years. To all of you, thank you for caring about me.

I would like to thank my dad for loving me exactly as I am, and for being continually interested in everything around him. My curiosity comes from you Dad. I am very grateful for the hours you have spent just being with me when I needed to be with you. I love you Dad.

Of course, the person who lives with me every day has taken this journey with me. Beautiful Stephen, thank you for encouraging me to do a PhD in the first place, for carrying more than your share when I was overwhelmed, for making my dreams yours also, and for being so proud of me that I have felt more loved than ever before. I love you Steve.

Finally, I would like to thank the Australian taxpayers who have allowed me to focus on this research program for three years secure in the knowledge that I was being financially supported. It is an honour to receive a scholarship and I have felt very grateful and committed to giving back to our society.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS DRAWN FROM THIS RESEARCH PROGRAM

Mergler, A.G., Spencer, F .H., & Patton, W. (paper submitted). Development of a measure of personal responsibility for adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*.

Mergler, A.G., Spencer, F. H., & Patton, W. (paper submitted). Relationships between personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem in adolescents and young adults. *Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist.*

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

The work contained in this dissertation has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature _____

Date _____

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW

Rationale

The choices faced by adolescents become more complex as they age, including

serious choices of whether to stay in school, whether to become sexually active,

and whether to seek tertiary education or enter the workforce. These choices can

have long-term positive or negative effects on their future well-being. A key factor

influencing the maturity of an adolescent's choice may be the degree to which they

have developed personal responsibility. Personal responsibility has been defined as

being accountable to oneself and to the needs and well-being of others (Ruyter,

2002). It is often expected that adolescents will develop personal responsibility

and make decisions that benefit themselves and others as they mature. However

there is little direct attention paid to facilitating this development.

Despite formal education being a place where students are educated to succeed

academically, limited attention is given to discerning and intervening in the types

of citizens students may become. Schools are well placed to teach values, respect

and responsibility, and adolescents increasingly become developmentally ready to

engage with such notions. Providing directed attention to the increased personal

and social responsibility that is expected of adolescents as they mature may well

serve to arm adolescents with the knowledge and skills needed to make valuable

and beneficial life choices.

The foremost impetus for this research was a drive to learn more about the role of

personal responsibility in the lives of adolescents, in order to encourage

adolescents to embrace personal responsibility for their choices and the outcomes. It was envisaged that doing so would lead adolescents to consider the choices available to them in any given situation in order to generate a more thoughtful and reflective approach to their lives.

Another motivation for this research included the continual assertion by the media and other social commentators that personal responsibility is lacking in members of society, particularly in adolescents. Newspaper articles abound lamenting adolescents' lack of personal responsibility and social commentators are increasingly highlighting the need to recapture and interweave an agenda of personal responsibility into the social fabric. Doherty (1998) has argued that there is an increasing trend in society to refuse accountability and blame others for one's situation. Despite these assertions, there is little empirical research that has attempted to define and examine adolescent personal responsibility. The current program of research aims to fill these gaps in the literature.

Research Program Outline

This dissertation is about the role of personal responsibility in the lives of adolescents. The research program which it describes examined the way in which adolescents and teachers understand personal responsibility, investigated whether a measure of personal responsibility can be developed and used, and explored whether personal responsibility can be taught to high school students in a school-based program. The purpose of the research was to broaden the currently limited theoretical and empirical literature around personal responsibility, to develop a

Personal Responsibility Questionnaire, and to create a Personal Responsibility Program to be taught to high school students. The research comprised three studies utilising quantitative and qualitative research methods to answer four research questions.

Study 1

   1. How do adolescents and teachers understand "personal responsibility?"

Study 2

   2. Can a quantitative questionnaire define and measure an adolescent's level of personal responsibility?

Study 3

   3. Can a program aimed at enhancing the personal responsibility level of adolescents be taught in a high school and demonstrate measurable effect?

   4. Is there a relationship between personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem?

Study 1

Study 1 used focus groups to address research question 1 because focus group interviews have been described in the literature as a key way to gain the perspective of adolescents (Morgan, 2004). Four focus groups with a total of 20 Year 11 students were conducted. As teachers are well placed to have insight into the responsibility levels of their students and would be directly involved in implementing the Personal Responsibility Program, Study 1 included two focus groups with a total of 10 teachers in order to elicit their perspectives. This study provided a wealth of data that served to inform Study 2, the development of the

Personal Responsibility Questionnaire, and Study 3, the creation, implementation and evaluation of the Personal Responsibility Program.

Study 2

The amount of literature examining personal responsibility is small, as noted by research strategies that led to identifying no quantitative measure of personal responsibility being available. Study 2 involved examining appropriate literature, focus group data from Study 1, and related measures to create a quantitative measure assessing personal responsibility in adolescents. A 100-item measure was created and tested on a large sample of adolescents, resulting in a final 30-item Personal Responsibility Questionnaire. This measure was to serve in the evaluation of the Personal Responsibility Program.

Study 3

A fundamental aim of the present study was to determine whether a Personal Responsibility Program could be implemented in a high school and demonstrate measurable effect. Study 3 involved the creation of the Personal Responsibility Program through examining other values-based education programs and the focus group data obtained in Study 1. Once created, the five-lesson program was implemented in one high school with Year 11 students. Approximately half of the Year 11 students undertook the program between April and June 2005 (the experimental group), with the remaining students completing the program between July and October 2005 (the control group). To assess whether the program had generated any changes in the adolescents' levels of personal responsibility, the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire developed in Study 2 was administered pre-

and post- intervention to both the experimental and control groups. Additionally, the well-established constructs of emotional intelligence and self-esteem were assessed using the Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The literature would suggest that the cognate areas of personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem may be related (Byrnes, 2003; Cohen & Sandy, 2003; Goleman, 1995; Harper & Marshall, 1991), thus it was envisaged that the program may also elicit change in these variables. In order to gather additional feedback about the program and the students' learning, qualitative data was gathered from the students and the teachers through their individual completion of a feedback sheet at the end of each lesson. Teachers also participated in a focus group interview after the first implementation of the Personal Responsibility Program as a means to provide suggestions for improvement with the program and its implementation.

Synopsis of Chapters

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the research and a synopsis of the chapters. Following the chapter synopses, the significance and contributions of the research program are discussed.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework for the research by examining constructivism, because the current program is situated within a constructivist understanding of student learning. The literature on adolescent cognitive and moral development is explored, along with a number of constructs that closely align with personal responsibility. Using these constructs as guides, personal responsibility is

defined and conceptualised and the small volume of previous empirical literature examining the construct is examined.

Chapter 3 examines the potential for teaching students personal responsibility in schools. While targeting the development of personal responsibility in education is an innovative idea, the notion of educating students in morals and values has been present for some time. In the literature, the language used to describe this intent centres on "character education" and "values-based education." This chapter examines the impact of character education in America, alongside the views of students undertaking these programs. The current lack of values-based education in Australia is noted and demonstrates the need for such education to occur. The chapter closes with an articulation of the need for this research and highlights the research questions posed.

Chapter 4 provides a reflection and critique of the methodological choices made for the current research program. Issues of sampling, ethics and the mixed-method longitudinal experimental design are discussed. A breakdown of each study is provided in which a justification of selected research methods is proposed.

Chapter 5 details Study 1, describing findings generated from focus group interviews undertaken with Year 11 students and high-school teachers in South East Queensland in Australia where the entire research program was undertaken. These qualitative data were content analysed and provided key parameters around which to define and describe personal responsibility. These data also informed the

development of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire (Study 2) and the

creation of the Personal Responsibility Program (Study 3).

Chapter 6 outlines Study 2, the steps taken to create and psychometrically

investigate the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire. The use of focus group data

from Study 1 (discussed in Chapter 5), related literature (discussed in Chapters 2

and 3) and quantitative measures of related constructs are examined to demonstrate

how they inform the new measure. The statistical analyses undertaken to evaluate

the psychometric qualities of the measure are presented. A final 30-item Personal

Responsibility Questionnaire is offered to measure this construct in adolescents.

Chapters 7 and 8 provide the findings of Study 3. The creation and implementation

of the Personal Responsibility Program is the focus of Chapter 7, while the

evaluation of the program is discussed in Chapter 8. Chapter 7 highlights the

pedagogical decisions that informed the Personal Responsibility Program and

provides a breakdown of the key themes of each lesson and the types of activities

used. Qualitative feedback provided by students and teachers after each lesson is

incorporated to illuminate the value and effectiveness of the program's design and

implementation. The chapter concludes with an examination of the researcher's

reflections around the program's design and implementation.

Chapter 8 details the findings from the quantitative measures used to evaluate the

success of the Personal Responsibility Program. These measures were completed

by the Year 11 students pre- and post-intervention to determine any changes in the

levels of personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem that may

have occurred. Additionally the qualitative feedback provided by students, that demonstrates that learning did occur, is incorporated to examine trends apparent in the quantitative data. The conclusion of Chapter 8 examines the relationships between personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem.

Finally, Chapter 9 discusses the overall findings and outcomes of the research. This chapter reviews the findings from all three studies and examines the contribution made by the research strategies to the theoretical, substantive and methodological literature. Reflections on the limitations of the research and implications for future research are discussed.

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Significance of the Research Program

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Today's adolescents are faced with a plethora of choices about how to behave and be in the world. As adolescents struggle to create their own identity and carve out their place in the world (Hacker, 1994), they are faced with an array of negative messages about what is "cool." The role models popular with adolescents often demonstrate undesirable behaviours and limited respect for others in society (e.g. Eminem, Snoop Dog and Paris Hilton). Adolescents need to be provided with more constructive messages about what constitutes being "cool", and these messages need to come from a powerful source that is equal to or greater than these celebrities.

Formal education is a fundamental way in which children and adolescents are socialised (Lickona, 1992), and this socialisation should include examining the way

we live, as individuals and as a society (Connors, 2002). Lewis (2004) argues that school aged children must be taught about personal responsibility as it prepares them to make their way into society as responsible and thoughtful citizens. Currently, the Australian secondary education system does not directly educate students about personal responsibility. There are no programs or classes that focus on developing this construct in adolescents.

On the 19th of July 2002, the then Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Technology, the Hon Brendan Nelson MP, commissioned a values education study in order to generate a national framework for good values education. The Values Education Study Final Report (Zbar, Brown, Bereznicki, & Hooper, 2003) used qualitative data obtained from 69 Australian schools. The study reported that most schools highlighted an increased willingness within the school and the community to examine values education explicitly. Despite the willingness and goodwill of schools and their communities, all schools highlighted that they were hampered in their attempts to deliver values-based education because there was a relative lack of values education resources.

Within this context, the goals of the current research program; to learn more about the role of personal responsibility in the lives of adolescents and to evaluate a carefully planned Personal Responsibility Program were warranted. This dissertation provides a definition of personal responsibility that can be further tested and refined, offers a quantitative measure that can assist in identifying adolescents who lack personal responsibility, and provides an educational program

that can be used by schools who seek to enhance the personally responsible

behaviours of their students.

Contributions of the Research Program

This primary research has made substantial contributions to the adolescent personal

responsibility literature. As personal responsibility is a highly discussed yet little

examined construct, particularly for the adolescent cohort, the program has

provided a definition of the construct and enhanced our understanding of its role in

the lives of adolescents. The focus group process highlighted that personal

responsibility could be understood and considered by adolescents due to the

cognitive and moral sophistication that develops early in this developmental

timeframe.

Study 2 generated a Personal Responsibility Questionnaire that can be used to

assess personal responsibility in adolescents. As societal commentators lament a

lack of personal responsibility in adolescents, it is essential that these assumptions

are tested quantifiably. Study 3 has designed a Personal Responsibility Program

based on theoretical and empirical literature. The program was designed to be

"teacher friendly", and allowed the participating school to gather qualitative and

quantitative feedback on the effect of the program's implementation. As school

administrators and teachers often bemoan the lack of personal responsibility in

their students (Lickona, 1992), this program could be used to address this issue and

put personal responsibility firmly on the agenda in high schools.

This study has also made a number of methodological contributions in the area of adolescent personal responsibility. Integrating focus group data with literature aided in the creation of the definition of personal responsibility and the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire and allowed the measure to be based on sound reasoning that was supported by past research and current understandings of adolescents. This measure was then psychometrically validated, resulting in a 30-item questionnaire that can be used in future research examining personal responsibility.

Additionally, the Personal Responsibility Program was developed using literature, focus group data and other education programs that teach similar values. Utilising these sources enabled the creation of a program that was theoretically sound, relevant to adolescents and appropriate for implementation in schools. Using the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire to evaluate the program provided further validation for the measure and enabled sound empirical examination of the program's effect. The inclusion of qualitative feedback from students and teachers further strengthened the program and its ability to be evaluated.

The design of this research highlights methodological strategies that further strengthen the study. Using a mixed-method design (incorporating quantitative and qualitative data) allowed for an in-depth exploration of the personal responsibility construct. The use of focus groups provided qualitative information that helped shape the quantitative measure. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods of evaluation to the program's implementation provided a statistical examination of

any potential changes and enabled student voices on the value of the program to be heard.

Utilising an experimental and control groups design strengthened Study 3. Doing so enabled any identified changes in the experimental group to be attributed to the program and not simply to developmental changes in adolescents. Additionally, the longitudinal aspect of the research program meant that changes could be examined over a longer period of time. If changes had occurred, this would have enabled an examination as to the longevity of these changes, strengthening the proposition that the program had made a lasting impact.

The extent of researcher involvement in the research program provided further methodological strength. As focus groups were undertaken in two high schools and the Personal Responsibility Program was implemented in one high school, the researcher was known to the adolescent participants. This generated a sense of mutual respect and understanding between the researcher and the students. As such, insights were offered by the adolescents and gained by the researcher, that may not have been uncovered otherwise.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW – PART I

Overview

This chapter articulates the theoretical framework that underpins this dissertation, and examines the literature associated with adolescent personal responsibility. As personal responsibility is an area that has not received a lot of theoretical or empirical attention, a range of related constructs are examined to demonstrate how they inform an understanding of personal responsibility. A definition of personal responsibility is articulated along with the components that encapsulate the construct. This chapter closes by discussing personal responsibility.

The majority of Australians typically live in a society where the individual is prioritised over the collective. Messages from the majority of sources indicate that it is acceptable to take everything we can, consume with little regard for external impact, and succeed at all costs. There is an increasing trend in society to refuse accountability and blame others for one's situation (Doherty, 1998). This societal direction coincides with an apparent absence of personal responsibility in many individuals. Personal responsibility has been defined as being accountable to oneself and to the needs and well-being of others (Ruyter, 2002). The idea that people should take personal responsibility has recently appeared in business, politics, the legal arena, and health (Doherty, 1998; Lupton, 1998; Reeves, 2004; Schulz & Cheng, 2002; Winston, 2003).

As society experiences the rise of public liability insurance premiums due to excessive compensation claims (James, 2004), and volunteer organisations close due to an inability to meet such premiums (Volunteering Australia, 2003), it is emerging that many are asking why people seem reluctant to take personal responsibility for their own choices. As the perceived lack of individual personal responsibility is credited with a growing number of society's ills, interest in personal responsibility has been reignited (Reeves, 2004). There is an increase in the number of newspaper articles questioning what has happened to personal responsibility, and social commentators are increasingly highlighting the need to recapture and interweave a personally responsible agenda into the social fabric. If society expects people to be personally responsible, it is imperative to determine how people learn to be personally responsible. To date however, few researchers in the psychological and educational fields have examined this construct.

This dissertation examines how adolescents understand, reason about, and integrate the notion of personal responsibility within their lives. Due to a focus on exploring and enhancing the perspectives adolescents currently hold, a constructivist framework underpins this dissertation. Constructivism contends that the acquisition of knowledge occurs through an active interaction between the individual and their environment, and that past experience provides a relevant and informing knowledge base (Matthews, 2003). Exploring adolescents' present level of understanding about personal responsibility, the value they place on the construct, and how personal responsibility factors into their experiences, corresponds with a constructivist understanding of learning and development.

Constructivism

Many recent psychologically based studies consider the process of development to be an interactionist one. This means that human development occurs due to an interaction between the cognitive structures of the individual, the environment and social influences. People are seen as active participants in their development, making choices which inform the situations that in turn inform their thoughts. These elements therefore complement the highly influential modern perspective pertaining to constructivism (Moshman, 1999). Constructivism is a widely accepted theoretical construct that challenges long-held assumptions regarding the nature of human cognition, because it is considerate of not only human development but also social, environmental and economic influences.

Since the formulation of the study of psychology, psychologists have progressed in the way they understand human cognitive development. Initially, psychoanalytic theory articulated by Freud (1973), argued that people were at the mercy of unconscious forces and biological drives. People had very little opportunity to change their "nature," a nature that was viewed as negative due to the conflict with civilised expectations (Sheehy, 2004). Following this theoretical perspective, behaviourist psychologists argued that the individual was born completely void of any influential elements, and any behaviour observed could be changed. Behavioural psychologists moved away from trying to understand the workings of the mind, arguing that only observable behaviour could be scientifically studied (Sheehy, 2004). While the psychoanalytic and behaviourist theories focused on different ends of the human experience, they shared a belief that human behaviour

was linear and unidirectional. Neither theory considered that humans actively sought to interact with their environment (Mahoney & Patterson, 1992).

A third force in the study of psychology occurred around the time of World War II and was referred to as existentialism in Europe and humanistic psychology in the United States. Despite having their roots in psychoanalytic theory, existentialism and humanistic psychology regarded humans more positively, and believed in their capacity for change through teaching (Mahoney, 1991). Mahoney and Patterson (1992) argued that the fourth and current phase in psychology developed between 1955 and 1965, where theories of cognition began to dominate. The cognitive approach to understanding human thought, affect, and behaviour has involved an interdisciplinary approach, and has emphasised "a determinism that is reciprocal and interactive rather than linear and unidirectional" (Mahoney & Patterson, 1992, p.160).

The most recent theoretical development in cognitive science is constructivism (Mahoney & Patterson, 1992). Constructivism argues that human reality is determined by the active interplay of individual cognitive structures and the external environment (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). Meaning is determined through experience, with people cognitively acting on incoming information in order to construct and understand it. Daily, humans process vast amounts of information with the fundamental goal of making meaning. Understanding our environment and ourselves allows us to do that which appears in our best interests. While searching for meaning, humans actively attend to, manipulate, organise, and reject information coming from other people, environmental stimuli, and our own

thoughts and feelings. In this way, people do not passively receive information from the external world. In direct contrast all information is complexly acted on and personalised, sometimes deliberately and often automatically (Berlin, 1996). Constructivism thus challenges the viewpoint of a single stable reality (Borgen, 1992).

Mahoney and Patterson (1992, pp.671-672) described three major components of constructivism.

1. Proactive cognition. The notion of the human brain as being a reactive organ is dismissed. In contrast to viewing the brain as accepting and storing a prescribed version of external stimuli, the human brain is believed to be selective and manipulative in what information it retains and how it encodes this information. As humans interact with their environment, they help construct the information they receive. Additionally, humans spend time thinking about what they are thinking about and how they are feeling. This interaction with themselves impacts their cognitive understanding, and information from the environment joins this continual cognitive activity. Thus all knowing experienced by humans is active, constructed, and individual.

2. Self-organising processes. If a system is self-organising, it has the ability to alter its current structural form to make sense of new information that challenges its present organization. Thus learning occurs due to the brain's attempt to demystify incongruent information by shuffling and altering the current knowledge constructions held. Piaget's (1985) processes of assimilation and accommodation, which highlight the notion that the human brain actively applies congruent

information and adapts to integrate incongruent information, sits comfortably within this constructivist understanding of learning.

3. Primacy of structure. Learning and acquiring knowledge is believed to involve processes that escape conscious awareness. While these processes, referred to as "deep structures" or "tacit knowing", cannot be articulated by the individual, they are believed to guide conscious processes. Mahoney (1991) identified four core themes of tacit knowing. These include value, which is concerned with motivation and emotion; meaning or reality, which places emphasis on order and stability; personal identity, which is concerned with self and integrity; and power, centering on control and ability.

Not only does constructivism take a more positive view of human development by considering the individual's environment than psychoanalytic and behaviourist theories, it also diverges from these psychological perspectives with regard to the potential and capability for change of which humans can achieve. While psychoanalysts believed change was extremely limited, and behaviourists viewed the potential for change to be limitless, constructivists are more egalitarian in relation to change. Constructivist theory highlights that change is certainly possible, while acknowledging that core beliefs and assumptions (regarding reality, identity, power/control, and values) are often extremely difficult to change. As humans actively construct their knowledge, they can selectively attune to that which supports their deep-seated beliefs, and disregard or overlook that which challenges them (Mahoney & Patterson, 1992).

During adolescence, perhaps more so than at any other time within the developmental life cycle, young people are actively involved in creating their identity, and discarding values and behaviours that they determine to be incongruent with the picture of themselves they are creating (Dembo & Eaton, 2000). Advances in cognitive thought, such as the ability to hypothesise and consider abstractions, allow adolescents to consider information from the environment in new and sophisticated ways (Eisenberg & Morris, 2004). Increased metacognitive awareness (the ability to think about one's own thoughts) allows adolescents to challenge and change what they believe (Devlin, 2002). The following aspects of the literature review discusses theories of adolescent cognitive and moral development, with particular emphasis on the stage models offered by Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1976). This literature highlights the cognitive and moral capabilities of adolescents, allowing for realistic expectations as to the depth of adolescent cognitive and moral processing. It is during adolescence that the cognitive complexities required for an understanding of personal responsibility first appear and are developed. This onset of cognitive sophistication makes adolescence an ideal time to introduce and teach the concept of personal responsibility, which is the focus of this research.

Adolescent Development

While people throughout the ages have acknowledged distinctions between children, adolescence, and adults; it was not until the twentieth century that the academic study of adolescent psychology originated (Berzonsky, 2000). Steinberg and Lerner (2004) contended that there have been two overlapping phases evident

in the scientific study of adolescence. The original phase developed with the work of G. Stanley Hall in 1904, and focused on the notion of adolescence as negative and deficient. Adolescence was seen as a period in the life span complicated with depression, anger, and fluctuating hormones (Petersen, 1988). Many theories arose during the first 70 years of the 20th century that highlighted adolescence as being a period of "storm and stress," categorised by increased tension with parents, a decline in self-esteem, and an overwhelming physical disruption to stability. While there were many "grand theories" of why the adolescent period was disruptive, there was a substantial lack of empirical evidence to support the assertions (Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

It is the move toward, and generation of, empirical studies assessing aspects of adolescent life that Steinberg and Lerner (2004) determined as the second phase of the scientific study of adolescent development. Beginning in the 1970s, researchers began to focus their studies on the developmental stage known as adolescence. This resulted in this period becoming a dominant force in developmental science and human development. Adolescence began to be seen as a distinct period in the life course, and researchers were keen to determine how developmental changes that occurred in adolescence could help explain changes in other areas of the life span (Hacker, 1994). Furthermore, the notion of adolescence as a time of upheaval was questioned, and the contention that adolescence is a time of positive growth and change emerged (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2004).

Results from longitudinal and epidemiologic studies have supported the positive growth aspects of adolescent development, highlighting that only 10% to 20% of

adolescents demonstrate some type of emotional disturbance (Offer, Ostrov, &
Howard, 1981; Petersen, 1988). Research by Offer, Ostrov, and Howard (1984)
found that most middle-class adolescents sustain close and successful relationships
with their families and friends, progress through puberty with minimal disruption,
and integrate easily with the values of the wider society. Steinberg and Lerner
(2004) claimed that this positive focus on adolescent development continues today,
resulting in studies which examine adolescent diversity and the application of
science to real-world situations.

Yet, some research about adolescent development notes the impact of "storm and
stress". Arnett (1999) argued that while a biological basis for adolescent storm and
stress may not be supported, it would be detrimental to turn our backs on the storm
and stress literature. Using a range of studies, Arnett demonstrated that some of
the key indicators considered symptomatic of adolescent storm and stress do indeed
intensify during the adolescent time frame. Research supports the notion that
during adolescence, conflict with parents is at its highest (Laursen, Coy, & Collins,
1998), mood levels are self-reported as more extreme and more frequently
changing than at any other time (Larson & Ham, 1993; Larson & Richards, 1994),
and involvement in risk behaviours peaks (Arnett, 1992; Moffit, 1993). Thus it can
be argued that adolescence, while a period that many may navigate well, is also a
time when boundaries are tested, emotions are intense, and the need for adventure
is keenly felt.

For many years the adolescent period, which generally covers the age range 10-18
years (Berzonsky, 2000) has been widely acknowledged to centre on the

exploration of the self and one's place in the social world. Adolescence is a time of discovery, when young people begin to ask the big questions about their own selves, morality, religion, and the meaning of their life. Essentially adolescents become inquisitive about who they are (Hacker, 1994). In their search for answers, adolescents move toward a more abstract understanding of themselves, and their self-concept becomes more developed and better organised. Importantly, adolescents begin to judge themselves in line with the standards and beliefs they themselves subscribe to, and less emphasis is given to social comparison (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). In this way, the adolescent begins to make independent choices and assessments about who they are, who they will be, and how they will act in the world.

Nurmi (2004) presented a four-step model of adolescent decision-making which highlights the active role adolescents have in their decision-making process. These four steps are channelling, selection, adjustment, and reflection. According to Nurmi, adolescents grow up in diverse and fluid environments. A range of varying factors impact upon the experiences adolescents have and the choices they make. An outcome of these factors, be they cultural, social, historical, or institutional, is the *channelling* of the direction in life that the adolescent may take. This is not to suggest however that adolescents are passive in this relationship. In contrast, Nurmi highlighted the active participation of adolescents as they *select* what environments they will be most affected and surrounded by. This active selection leads adolescents into particular future paths where others examine the choices they have made. External feedback allows the adolescent to *adjust* their goals, plans, and thinking in an attempt to increase their likelihood of success in the areas they

see as valuable for their future lives. This process of change also requires adolescents to *reflect* on their own cognitions and the outcomes from these; a self-aware reflection which encourages adolescents to find their place in the world through utilising their autonomous power of choice.

This active construction of knowledge and experience occurs throughout the life span, yet it is not until adolescence that complex cognitive development occurs. As children age, they are able to think more deeply and abstractly about environmental information and their own cognitions. Examining the developing nature of one's cognitive thought leads one to the work of Piaget (1932). Piaget's stage model of cognitive development illustrates the cognitive changes that occur as children develop, and focuses on the development of sophisticated cognitive reasoning during adolescence. An awareness of these processes provides insight into the level of cognitive complexity adolescents can demonstrate. Determining the level of sophistication of adolescent thought illuminates the likelihood that adolescents are able to understand, reflect on, and exhibit personal responsibility.

Adolescent Cognitive Development

The term cognition refers to processing that occurs in the human mind in relation to acquiring, modifying, and manipulating knowledge (Byrnes, 2003). When looking specifically at adolescent cognitive development, Jean Piaget is acknowledged as being a foundational influence in this line of theoretical enquiry (Keating, 2004). Piaget (1932) generated a stage-based understanding of cognitive development

centred on the belief that people develop greater cognitive complexity as they progress sequentially through four stages of development. These four stages included the sensorimotor stage (infants), the preoperational stage (young children), the concrete operations stage (school-age children) and the formal operations stage (adolescents). Each stage is characterised by distinctly different features in the way young people think (Richardson, 1998).

Piaget (1985) believed that greater cognitive sophistication resulted from a process called equilibration. Equilibration is the balance of two mental processes: assimilation and accommodation (Sheehy, 2004). The assimilation of information occurs when incoming data fits within already held beliefs. This new information can be assimilated into an existing cognitive structure with minimal cognitive disruption (Piaget, 1985). For example, if a child believes that all dogs are large, crossing paths with a German Shepherd dog will reconfirm that which she/he believes. The type of dog, a German Shepherd, can be assimilated into her/his schema that states that all dogs are large.

In contrast, the process of accommodation requires the mental altering of current cognitive structures in order to receive information that challenges one's current expectations and beliefs (Piaget, 1985). An example of this would be if the same child was introduced to the Jack Russell breed of dog. The young child would be forced to alter her/his current schema, that all dogs are large, as the Jack Russell breed proves her/his belief inaccurate. The child must adjust her/his schema to reflect the fact that dogs can be small or large. This continual cognitive reworking to either assimilate or accommodate information results in greater rational abilities

for the individual, and is believed by Piaget (1985) to be the driving force behind learning.

It is the development of formal operations that presents the potential for enormous changes during the adolescent years. Piaget (1932) stated that the changes that occur in adolescence are driven by an abstract system of propositional thinking. The ability to think abstractly about real and imagined ideas allows adolescents to differentiate between what they believe and the beliefs of others. Further, adolescents develop the ability to think through alternate realities and consider the notion of reality itself (Gullota, Adams, & Markstrom, 1999). Piaget's (1932) formal operations allow adolescents to consider the range of possibilities that may explain a given occurrence and derive from this reasoning the actual relationship (O'Mahony, 2001).

Keating (1980) determined five outcomes that are generated by the development of formal operations in adolescence. First, due to an increased ability to engage abstractions, adolescents become interested in the world of possibilities. Their thinking expands to include that which is abstract alongside that which is concrete. Second, adolescents are able to generate and test hypotheses, demonstrating the emergence of scientific reasoning. Third, adolescents begin to ponder the future and examine cause and effect in their lives. Fourth, sophisticated thinking broadens the adolescent's cognitive horizon. Adolescents move into complex analysis of major issues, including religion, identity and morality. Fifth, the adolescent is able to identify their own thoughts, and appreciate that others may not share their perspective. Metacognition (thinking about thoughts) allows

adolescents to consider the control they have over how they think and what they think about. Current research largely supports the view that more sophisticated reasoning appears around age 11 in young people (Moshman, 1999).

The processes afforded by formal operations allow adolescents to consider their choices, weigh courses of action and a range of possible consequences, reflect on how their choices and actions are impacting on their lives, and consider the viewpoints of other people. This developing ability of self-reflection allows adolescents to monitor and select their feelings and responses (Hacker, 1994). Because of this, adolescents have the power to choose how they will feel about, and react to various situations. Adolescents actively choose how they will be in the world, directing the journey of their lives. As they are cognitively capable of sophisticated reasoning, they must be ultimately responsible for the choices they make (Glasser, 1998).

Older adolescents and adults have greater knowledge than younger people and demonstrate an advanced ability to organise, analyse, retain, and reflect on this knowledge (Keating, 1980). Moreover, adolescents and adults appear more constructivist in their approach to knowledge and understanding such knowledge, meaning that they actively seek to understand their own thoughts and how these thoughts are generated and processed (Byrnes, 2003). It appears that during adolescence, a wide array of cognitive mechanisms coordinate to allow for sophisticated thinking. This thinking appears to promote "a self-aware, self-guided, and self-monitoring system of conscious control" (Keating, 2004, p.74).

As the cognitive ability of people develops, so too does the potential for increasingly complex moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1981).

Adolescents, due to the complex cognitive changes described above, are able to analyse, question, extrapolate, and deduce newly influential philosophical and moral concerns. An influential theorist and writer on the way in which adolescents develop their moral reasoning is Kohlberg (1976). Like Piaget (1932), Kohlberg developed a stage-based model of moral development, where moral reasoning becomes more sophisticated as one moves through each developmental stage. As personal responsibility implies doing what best serves oneself while considering the needs of others, it shows itself as a moral construct. Thus an understanding of how adolescents process moral information informs the discussion of personal responsibility.

Adolescent Moral Development

The way in which adolescents reason about moral dilemmas and situations is the basis of adolescent moral development (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Adolescence has been marked as a period in which young people become passionately interested in moral questions (Gilligan, 1987). Their developing cognitive sophistication enhances their ability to question mightily in the moral domain (Byrnes, 2003). Hacker (1994) contends that the adolescent's ability to engage abstract thinking capabilities is directed toward establishing a deeper and more profound understanding of her or his place in the world. Thus the interplay between cognitive sophistication and moral reasoning development emerges. Indeed,

Kohlberg (1976) highlighted that Piaget's (1932) development of formal operations in adolescence enabled and encouraged the advance in moral questioning and reasoning that first appears in adolescence.

Lawrence Kohlberg (1976) generated a theory of moral development based on the cognitive-developmental theory espoused by Piaget (1932), which has informed much of our contemporary understanding of adolescent moral development. Kohlberg's stage model of moral development posits a hierarchical nature in which people progress up the stages. Moral reasoning at higher stages is said to be superior to that at lower stages. This is not however simply because more information has been added to earlier stages. In contrast, Kohlberg held that each stage presented higher moral reasoning as it was a transformation of the old stages, combined with new elements to generate a new structure (Boom, Brugman, & Heijden van der, 2001).

From his research, Kohlberg (1976) determined six stages of moral thought, which are divided into three major levels, the preconventional, the conventional, and the postconventional or autonomous. A description of each level and stage as articulated by Kohlberg and Hersh (1977, pp.54-55) follows:

1. **Preconventional Level** – The preconventional child is responsive to cultural rules and labels of good and bad, right or wrong. These labels are interpreted however in terms of the physical consequences (punishment, reward, exchange of favours) or in terms of the physical power of those who articulate the rules and labels. The preconventional child is therefore usually obedient and good, in the hope of either receiving a benefit or avoiding a punishment.

Stage 1: The punishment and obedience orientation. Determining whether human action is good or bad is judged on the physical consequences of the action, regardless of the actions meaning or value.

Stage 2: The instrumental-relativist orientation. Satisfying one's own needs takes precedence in this line of moral reasoning, and that which does so is determined as the right course of action. While aspects of fairness, reciprocity, and equal sharing are present, they come into play in a physical, pragmatic way. Reciprocity, for example, is exemplified in a "you do something for me and I'll do something for you" approach, and not upheld out of loyalty, gratitude, or justice.

2. **Conventional Level** – This second level usually comes to the fore in preadolescence. The focus here is on conforming to the expectations of the individual's family, group, or nation, regardless of consequences. This acceptance goes beyond mere conforming to the expected norms however, and contains loyalty to the dominant order, and an active willingness to maintain, support, and justify the order. The importance of identifying with the persons or group involved in the dominant order becomes highly important.

Stage 3: The "good boy – good girl" orientation. This stage, due to its emphasis on conforming, sees the individual strive to demonstrate behaviour determined to be the norm in order to be accepted and valued by the dominant order. Good, nice behaviour is usually responded to with warmth and appreciation from those around the individual displaying the behaviour. In this sense, the individual seeks approval by being nice.

Stage 4: The "law and order" orientation. Doing what is right is determined by upholding the rules of society. Importance is placed on maintaining the social

order by obeying societal laws and showing respect for authority. Respect from other members of the society is earned by upholding and committing to one's duty.

3. **Postconventional, Autonomous, or Principled Level** – This final level appears during adolescence, and is marked by a move toward more independent identification with one's moral beliefs. There is a clear effort to establish moral values and principles separate to the authority of the groups or persons holding these principles and at a distance from the individual's association with these groups.

Stage 5: The social-contract, legalistic orientation. Societal standards, which have been examined and accepted by the whole of society, define moral behaviour in this stage. Personal values and opinions are respected and heard, enabling consensus as to the rules, standards, and laws to which human should uphold. Outside of these determined rules and procedures, personal opinion is respected as determining what is right and wrong for individuals. At this stage of moral reasoning therefore, the legal point of view holds weight, but is open to change and progress due to societal shifts. Unlike Stage 4, which focuses on freezing the current law and order script as ideal, Stage 5 recognises that time and societal changes require the law to be fluid. That which is morally and legally right may change over time, and informed societal examination must be instrumental in affecting legal change.

Stage 6: The universal-ethical-principle orientation. At this stage, guiding moral values become more abstract and centred on ethical principles. Determining what is right is situational and removed from concrete right and wrong explanations. The framework for making moral decisions centres on universal principles of justice, human rights, and respect for the dignity of human beings.

While individuals make their own moral choices and must accept responsibility for them, humanity does not exist in a social vacuum. Others impact upon individual lives, and people are sometimes exposed to situations that challenge their ideas. Kohlberg (1981) argued that social interaction plays a pivotal role in developing one's moral cognitive structures. Reciprocal social relationships require adolescents to take the perspective of others. Young people are thus required to cognitively wrestle with ideas that are different to their own, and consider possibilities they had not initially thought of. The more complex and novel the environment, the more one is encouraged to challenge one's current ways of thinking and reasoning. This continual reworking of cognitive thought to encompass and understand an array of moral situations, highlights the active effort people expend to make meaning of their experiences (Berlin, 1996).

Kohlberg's (1981) view of morality embraces a constructivist understanding of moral development, highlighting the active construction of a succession of cognitive structures, each able to resolve conflicts and contradictions produced by previous ways of thinking about moral issues. The individual is seen as actively selecting environments and acting upon those environments and their own cognitive structures to reach appropriate moral decisions. Assessment of an individual's moral development is based on how she or he reasons about moral dilemmas rather than on specific moral beliefs or conclusions (Moshman, 1999). Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) attribute this interaction between one's cognitive structure and the complexity apparent in the environment to moral development.

Kohlberg (1981) believed that moral development moved individuals toward an increased sense of moral autonomy and a more adequate conception of justice. Justice, the primary regard for the value and equality of all human beings and for reciprocity in human relations, is a central tenet in Kohlberg's theory and argued to be a basic and universal standard (Singer, 1999). Other researchers have questioned this notion of justice as central to moral reasoning.

A major challenge to the universality of Kohlberg's principle of justice has come from Gilligan and colleagues (Gilligan, 1977; Gilligan & Belenky, 1980; Gilligan & Murphy, 1979). These researchers presented a number of studies that examined the moral choices men and women make in real-life situations, separating from previous studies that only used male participants in hypothetical situations. In this way, Gilligan and her colleagues were able to determine how individuals apply moral reasoning when considering choices that will affect their lives. They observed that some women approached moral problems in ways distinctly different to that proposed in the established theories of moral development. Based on these findings, Gilligan (1982) determined that the single moral perspective; that of justice, was insufficient to understand women's moral judgements. This led to the introduction of the care perspective as an alternative approach to moral decision-making.

The care orientation of moral reasoning articulated by Gilligan (1982) differed from the justice orientation in several ways. Kohlberg's (1981) justice orientation emphasised rights, individual autonomy, equality, and fairness. Gilligan's (1982) care orientation, in contrast, emphasised responsibility to others, relationships,

sensitivity to social context, and compassion (Moshman, 1999). Interestingly, Gilligan did not dismiss Kohlberg's justice conception as wrong, but rather highlighted that both justice and care should inform any model of moral development. Gilligan argued that people have experiences with issues of justice and care throughout their lives, and therefore both factors would persist as moral concerns. Gilligan (1982) claimed that Kohlberg's (1981) theory enhances the male perspective of morality by focusing on justice, and in doing so generates lower moral scores for females. Examining both orientations in line with moral reasoning would lead to a greater understanding of the way both men and women reason about moral dilemmas (Stroud, 2001).

To empirically assess the validity of integrating the care perspective into the framework of moral development, Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) examined the notion of justice and care on the moral orientation of adolescent and young adult men and women. Moving away from hypothetical moral dilemmas, the researchers asked participants to consider an occasion in their own lives where they were faced with a moral dilemma, and asked targeted questions to determine their reasoning behind attempting to resolve the dilemma. The results showed that both genders used justice and care orientations when trying to understand and resolve moral dilemmas, and that a gender preference for each orientation did arise, with men favouring the justice orientation and women favouring the care orientation. Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) argued that this gender distinction is so pronounced that removing women from studies on moral development may easily result in overlooking the concept of care in moral reasoning.

A study by Singer (1999) provided further support for Gilligan's (1982) care perspective in the moral reasoning of females. One hundred and thirty-three adolescents (90 boys and 43 girls between the ages of 12 and 18 years) from the New Zealand Air Training Corps were presented with two hypothetical scenarios of ethical decisions. The scenarios differed in that the unethical choice would unduly benefit or unfairly harm someone in the scenario. The results showed that decisions resulting in harm were judged as more unethical by all participants than those decisions resulting in a benefit. Interestingly however, in scenarios where the unethical decision made benefited someone in the scenario, female participants only found the choice unethical if the person who made the choice was not considered a friend. When this person was identified as a friend, female participants did not consider the same behaviour unethical. In contrast, male participants regarded the behaviour as unethical regardless of whether the person making the choice was deemed a friend or not. These results highlight that while justice plays a role in adolescent moral reasoning, the notion of care is particularly relevant to the moral choices female adolescents make.

While some studies have provided support to Gilligan's addition of the care perspective in understanding moral reasoning (Bardige, 1988; Gilligan & Wiggins, 1988; Irlen & Dorr, 2002; Johnson, 1988; Singer, 1999) reviews by Walker (1984; 1991) have not supported the care perspective assertion. Walker (1991) argued that differences in moral reasoning identified by Gilligan and colleagues could be attributed to the differences in the situations in which people were engaging in reasoning behaviour. Kohlberg's (1976) theory asserts that individuals demonstrate consistency within their stage of moral reasoning across a range of

tasks and contexts. Research examining adolescents in sensitive situations however, have found that they may reason at lower stages in these situations than they do in situations of less sensitivity (Gilligan, Kohlberg, Lerner, & Belenky, 1971; Krebs, Vermeulen, Carpendale, & Denton, 1991). Rest (1984) argued that behaviour is influenced by various situational changes, whether considerable or trivial. Additionally, these changes affect different people in different ways, making an understanding of moral reasoning across contexts and situations difficult.

For the first time, adolescents are able to focus on the thoughts they have and affect change if their thoughts are not delivering the outcomes they desire. This metacognitive occurrence presents adolescents with greater moral sophistication and as a result, greater personal responsibility. Hacker (1994) contended that making active choices and accepting responsibility for these choices are behaviours that must develop in adolescence. For adolescents to develop their sense of personal responsibility however, they must be aware that they can control the thoughts they are experiencing and the behaviours they are enacting. If adolescents fail to grasp this fact, they may endure and perpetuate negative cognitions that serve to hinder their growth and lead to reactive, as opposed to self-regulated, emotion and behaviours (Glasser, 1998).

Related Constructs

To date, the construct of personal responsibility does not have a clear definition in the literature. Nor do the few studies that have sought to examine personal

responsibility have an established consistent operationalisation of the term. Before

personal responsibility can be defined, measured and improved, it is necessary to

examine related constructs in the psychological field. An understanding of these

constructs will enrich and clarify the component parts of personal responsibility.

The next section explores previous research that has examined people's willingness

to hold themselves or external factors responsible for individual outcomes; a sense

of power and control to act on the world and achieve one's goals; a belief in oneself

as an individual and one's abilities; the likelihood that one will reflect upon one's

choices and strategies, and one's ability to regulate, understand, and control one's

emotions. These components are ones that researchers may expect to find

particularly relevant to an examination of personal responsibility. These aspects of

human behaviour are explored and explained in the constructs of locus of control,

personal agency, self-efficacy, self-concept, self-esteem, self-regulation, and

emotional intelligence.

Locus of Control

Rotter (1966) examined the impact reinforcement had on the level of internal or

external control people ascribed to their behaviour. This construct of internal

versus external control of reinforcement has sometimes been called locus of

control. Locus of control is defined as a tendency to either take responsibility for

one's own actions or to see external control determining outcomes (Richards, Ellis,

& Neill, 2002). When examining internal versus external control of reinforcement,

Rotter (1966) was interested in whether or not an individual believed that their own

behaviour, skills, or internal dispositions would determine what reinforcement was received.

An external locus of control is defined according to Rotter (1975) as a person's tendency to ascribe a reinforcement to luck, chance or fate. In contrast, a person with an internal locus of control will perceive the event to be contingent upon their own behaviour or relatively permanent characteristics. Put another way, an adolescent who believes they passed the test because the test was easy would be demonstrating an external locus of control, while an adolescent who passed the test and attributed this success to studying hard would be demonstrating an internal locus of control. Research has shown that adolescents who self-report an internal locus of control demonstrate higher academic achievement than those who self-report an external locus of control (Anderson, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2002). Another study reports a high sense of family cohesion and good communication with parents (Grossman et al., 1992). Further, an internal locus of control has been found to protect adolescents from risk factors (Garmezy, 1987; Grossman et al., 1992; Werner, 1986).

This understanding of locus of control helps inform further understanding of personal responsibility. An adolescent who believes their behaviour determines outcomes (internal locus of control) may be more willing to hold her/himself accountable for their behaviour and the consequences. It would be expected that a personally responsible adolescent would believe that studying hard for a test would produce good grades, and hence take the responsibility to do so. In turn, they are likely to take responsibility for the outcome their behaviour achieves. While the

focus of the locus of control literature is on the outcome and the reinforcement, the current examination of personal responsibility aims to begin with the awareness of an individual's cognitive thoughts, feelings and choices. The locus of control literature does not examine these components.

Personal Agency/Self-Efficacy

Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory states that the way people perceive their abilities and their environment, impacts on the environment in which they find themselves. Two important constructs were highlighted in this theory, that of personal agency and self-efficacy. Personal agency has been defined as a person's perception that they can control their own thoughts and behaviour, develop a feeling of personal competence and control, and use these factors to obtain a desired outcome (Baker, Little, & Brownell, 2003; Higgs, 1995). More broadly, Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) stated that agency is the capacity of a person to act upon the world. A person with a high level of personal agency is able to understand what they are thinking and how they can regulate their thoughts to generate an outcome. Personal agency is interested in whether one perceives they have the means needed to produce a desired outcome.

Personal agency further informs an understanding of personal responsibility by highlighting that adolescents with high levels of personal agency; the belief that they have what is necessary to control their thoughts and behaviour; may be more likely to take personal responsibility. In order to accept that one has made deliberate choices and is therefore responsible for them, an individual must believe

that they have the power to actively make a choice. Personal agency mainly concerns itself with a cognitive component; whether one perceives they can achieve something. With regard to defining personal responsibility, this study seeks to incorporate cognitive, behavioural and outcome factors. Cognitively, personal responsibility asks "Am I aware;" behaviourally, personal responsibility states "I choose to act;" and with regard to outcomes, personal responsibility requires that "I am accountable" and "I am socially aware."

Bandura (1989) defined self-efficacy as the extent to which people believe they have the capability to exercise control over their own thought processes and events that affect their lives. A person judges how capable they are based on a range of factors, including their mastery of performance, comparisons of their performance against others, verbal discussions and other social influences, and physiological responses that highlight their capabilities, strengths, and vulnerability. Extensive cognitive processing of this information, such as determining its value and integrating it through self-reflective thought, generates a fluid picture of one's efficacy beliefs. Research has demonstrated that children of similar abilities, who differ in their level of self-efficacy beliefs, provide very distinct reasoning for the outcomes they achieve. Those with high self-efficacy beliefs are likely to attribute failure to a lack of effort, while those with low self-efficacy beliefs are likely to attribute it to their poor ability (for a review see Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996).

A fundamental foundation for adolescents in the process of building their unique personality is their ability to rely on themselves (Bacchini & Magliulo, 2003;

Caprara et al., 1998); that is their belief in their self-efficacy and personal agency.

Bandura (1989) and colleagues (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, &

Regalia, 2001; Bandura, Pastorelli, Barbaranelli, & Caprara, 1999) argued that

young people must develop their regulatory self-efficacy (ability to resist negative

pressure from their environment) and emotional self-efficacy (ability to cope with

and control their own emotional reactions) in order to feel they can direct their lives

and relate well to others. Gender differences in self-efficacy have been reported.

Research by Bacchini and Magliulo (2003) examining the self-efficacy and self-

image of 675 13 to 19-year-olds demonstrated that females self-report a lesser

degree of well-being and more intense experiencing of emotions than males.

Despite this decrease in emotional self-efficacy, females recorded a higher self-

description in relation to academic and regulatory efficacy than males.

The focus of self-efficacy is the belief that people can change an outcome. It may

be expected that if adolescents believe they can change outcomes that affect them,

they would be willing to take responsibility for the outcomes they have generated.

Thus, it can be concluded that personally responsible adolescents, like those high in

self-efficacy, feel they can control their own thought processes and to some degree

the events that affect their lives. Extending this understanding, the scope of

personal responsibility may question whether adolescents are then accountable for

their choices, behaviour and outcomes, and whether they demonstrate an awareness

of how their choices impact on the lives on others.

Self-Concept/Self-Esteem

Self-concept is a highly ambiguous term that is difficult to define (Harre, 1998). One of the reasons for this difficulty lies in the fact that people can highlight different self-concepts within their own selves depending on what aspect of their self-concept is being examined. Research has shown that adolescents do vary their self-descriptions when considering how they are in different roles (such as with parents, romantic partners, and classmates) (Hart, 1988; Harter & Monsour, 1992; Rosenberg, 1986). While adolescents describe themselves differently when asked to rate their potential across differing domains, it is undeniable that they tend to ascribe a global self-concept upon themselves (Bacchini & Magliulo, 2003). One widely accepted definition of global self-concept is that it is the perception one has of one's identity and achievements across a range of areas including at work, in school, in social relationships and in intimate relationships (Powell, 2004). Students with a poor self-concept are often confused about their identity and feel powerless to change their situation (Coopersmith, 1981). Gender impacts heavily on an adolescent's self-concept, with males largely presenting a stronger self-image than females (Laukkanen, Halonen, Aivio, Viinamaeki, & Lehtonen, 2000; Ostrov, Offer, & Kennet, 1989).

Self-esteem is widely understood to be the affective response people have to their self-concept, referring to how one feels about oneself, including one's sense of self-worth and self-respect (Rosenberg, 1985). Adolescence is a key developmental phase in which one's sense of self is developing, as one moves away from the direction of significant others (such as parents) and begins to make more complex

and potentially life altering decisions on one's own (Hacker, 1994). The value of these decisions may rest in part on the level of self-esteem the adolescent demonstrates. Global self-esteem has been shown to correlate positively with academic performance (Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1989), and negatively with juvenile delinquency (Kaplan, 1980; Rosenberg et al., 1989), and psychological depression (Rosenberg, 1985; Rosenberg et al., 1989; Wylie, 1979). High levels of self-esteem have been found to protect adolescents from risk factors (Garmezy, 1983; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1982).

Gender differences in self-esteem have been noted over a significant period of time, with females consistently revealing lower levels of self-esteem than males, particularly during adolescence (Block & Robins, 1993; Bolognini, Plancherel, Bettschart, & Halfon, 1996; Chubb, Fertman, & Ross, 1997; Dukes & Martinez, 1994; Harper & Marshall, 1991; Richman, Clark, & Brown, 1985; Steitz & Owen, 1992). There are however a number of studies on self-esteem that have failed to find gender differences (Baldwin & Hoffmann, 2002; Mullis & Mullis, 1992; Schwalbe & Staples, 1991) and some studies have found higher self-esteem among females than males (Thornberg & Jones, 1982; Whiteside, 1976). Dukes and Martinez (1994) argued that this inconsistency in the research reflects differences in theoretical frameworks and methodologies, and serves to highlight the complexity around the construct of self-esteem. As self-esteem is a key area that develops during adolescence, and correlates with many key areas in one's life (such as academic achievement and depression), the variable was chosen for further study in the current research program (see Study 3). Additionally the study seeks to add to the current literature examining gender differences in this area.

As personal responsibility concerns itself in part with one's ability to understand one's own and others' emotions, the construct may correlate with self-esteem. Adolescents who are able to gauge their own emotional states and act on them responsibly may feel better about themselves than those who feel swamped by their emotions and compelled to act out to release them. Further, it can be argued that those who demonstrate low levels of self-esteem may also demonstrate low levels of personal responsibility. Adolescents who feel that they are worthless, ineffectual and out of control may shy away from owning their choices and accepting responsibility for the outcomes. For those low in self-esteem, the outcomes in their lives may always be someone else's fault (such as parents or partners). It is only when individuals feel brave enough and strong enough to accept their mistakes as well as their successes that they will hold themselves responsible for the lives they are creating for themselves. Piltz (1998) argued that personal responsibility is something that is valued in our society; the development of this skill may lead to increased self-esteem.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation has been broadly defined as the active effort a person generates to control her or his thinking, feelings, and actions in order to achieve a skill or goal (Dembo & Eaton, 2000; Zimmerman, 1989). This concept was developed out of the studies of Zimmerman (1986; 1989) and Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1986; 1988) who investigated students' selection and use of learning, critical-thinking and self-monitoring strategies. Behaviours exhibited by those students

who are able to self-regulate their learning include developing a plan of attack, setting goals, thinking through alternative solutions, and developing contingency plans when things go wrong (Ley & Young, 2001). Research has shown that children, adolescents and young adults who can self-regulate their behaviour have higher grades and less disruptive behaviour than students who can not (Benbenutty & Zimmerman, 2003; Nelson & Obremski, 1990).

Providing adolescents with the ability to self-regulate allows them to take personal control of their learning and their lives at a time when they most want to do so. While adolescents desire greater freedom as they mature (Harvey & Retter, 2002), they do not miraculously develop the skills necessary to be responsible with that freedom. Adolescents must learn how to control their own behaviour (Krouse & Krouse, 1981). Wills, McNamara, Vaccaro and Hirky (1996) found that adolescents with poorly developed self-regulation capabilities were more likely to develop anger-focused coping strategies than adolescents with appropriately developed self-regulation capabilities. The processes of self-regulation, such as setting goals, generating expectations for success, developing contingency plans to persist in the face of adversity, and deep cognitive involvement, are strategies that must be taught to adolescents as they struggle to do all of these things on the road to self-determination (Ley & Young, 2001; Trawick & Como, 1995).

Self-regulation requires a level of personal responsibility, if society is to consider the construct to mean an awareness of one's cognitive abilities. In order to self-regulate, an adolescent must have an awareness of their own thoughts, feelings and behavioural responses. Thus in order to take responsibility for their self, it can be

assumed that these same factors must also be present. A self-regulated adolescent acknowledges that their choices, feelings and behaviours are impacting on their outcomes. In doing so, the adolescent is acknowledging the role they play in their life circumstances, thus taking some level of responsibility over where they find themselves. It would be expected that a relationship between personal responsibility and self-regulation would exist with those high in self-regulation being high in personal responsibility. A possible point of difference between self-regulation and the growing definition of personal responsibility is that self-regulation does not examine how the adolescent perceives their level of accountability. Personal responsibility, as understood in the current research program, takes an interest in what level of accountability adolescents are willing to take for their own feelings, choices and behaviour.

Emotional Intelligence

The concept of emotional intelligence was developed by Mayer and Salovey (1995) and involves the interplay of emotional experiences and cognitive processes. Mayer and Salovey (1997) defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; [and] the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge" (p. 10). Emotional intelligence has four components. These are: (1) reflective regulation of emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth; (2) understanding and analysing emotions and employing emotional knowledge; (3) emotional facilitation of thinking; and (4) perception, appraisal, and expression of emotion (Mayer & Salovey, 1995).

Emotional intelligence includes an ability to understand and manage oneself

(Mayer & Salovey, 1993). During adolescence, it is increasingly important that

one is able to make decisions for oneself that support one's needs and enhance

one's life. As the move toward greater freedom takes place, the adolescent must be

able to monitor their own emotional cues in order to seek support where necessary

and judge accurately whether they are heading in the direction they wish. As

adolescents develop, their emotional skills become highly important as their

emotional experiences and understandings become more complex (Arnett, 1999).

Faced with more challenging emotional situations, such as how to relate in intimate

relationships, adolescents will draw upon the skills they have. Those adolescents

who have less developed emotional skills (such as reacting to rejection with anger

and violence) may continue to act in ways that hinder their success. It is important

that adolescents are offered opportunities to explore, practice and develop a range

of emotional skills in a range of emotional situations.

It has been argued that emotional intelligence is fundamentally important for

beneficial social relationships and predicts as much as 80% of a person's success in

life (Goleman, 1995). While some researchers have argued that this claim appears

overstated, they nevertheless concur that emotional intelligence is an important

construct that must be further examined (Trinidad, Unger, Chou, Azen, & Johnson,

2004; Woitaszewski & Aalsma, 2004) The majority of the research examining

emotional intelligence however has been largely theoretical in nature and

conducted with adults (Petrides & Furnham, 2000), demonstrating a pressing need

to empirically examine this construct with adolescents (Charbonneau & Nicol, 2002; Harrod & Scheer, 2005).

One study that examined the role of trait emotional intelligence in adolescent academic performance and deviant behaviour was conducted by Petrides, Frederickson and Furnham (2004). Trait emotional intelligence refers to "a constellation of behavioural dispositions and self-perceptions concerning one's ability to recognize, process, and utilize emotion-laden information" (Petrides et al., 2004, p.278). Six hundred and fifty pupils in a British secondary school (mean age 16.5 years) completed a verbal reasoning test and self-report questionnaires examining trait emotional intelligence and personality type. These results were then examined alongside their academic grades and school absences and exclusions. The results showed that for low IQ students only, high trait emotional intelligence served to enhance their performance in English and their overall grades. In relation to truancy, students with low trait emotional intelligence were significantly more likely to have been expelled from school. This study highlights the important role that trait emotional intelligence plays in the scholastic and deviant behaviour of students, particularly those with low intellectual ability. Research examining the role that emotional intelligence plays in the success of students with high intellectual ability is unclear and ongoing (Petrides et al., 2004; Woitaszewski & Aalsma, 2004).

Of the studies that have examined emotional intelligence in adolescence, most have explored and reported significant gender differences. Adolescent females largely self-report higher levels of emotional intelligence, self-awareness and empathy than

adolescent males (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Bajgar, 2001; Devi & Rayulu, 2005; Harrod & Scheer, 2005). As girls are socialised to consider the feelings of others and engage deeply in close, emotionally intimate relationships from an early age (Horney, 1967), this finding is not surprising. Mayer and Salovey (1993) argue that a person high in emotional intelligence is more likely to be aware of and open to their internal emotional experiences, and better able to communicate their emotional needs. These abilities will likely impact on a person's sense of wellbeing. A range of studies with adolescents and adults have lent support to the notion that higher emotional intelligence is linked to greater life satisfaction (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000; Palmer, Donaldson, & Stough, 2002). It is imperative therefore that both males and females learn to be emotionally competent.

The construct of emotional intelligence informs our understanding of the ability and willingness of adolescents to hold themselves responsible for their emotional experiences. It would be expected that someone high in emotional intelligence would attend to her or his emotional responses when deciding upon a course of action or how to feel about an occurrence. An ability to understand one's own emotions may lead one to accept responsibility for them and the resulting behaviour. If so, then a high level of emotional intelligence may coincide with a high level of personal responsibility. The emotional intelligence literature however has not examined the connection between emotional intelligence and personal responsibility for feelings, thoughts and behaviour.

Relation to Personal Responsibility

The variables discussed have examined the level of awareness an individual has with regard to their own thoughts and feelings, the level of control they believe they have over their behaviour, the level of belief they have in their abilities, the level of ownership they are willing to accept for the choices they make, the level of worth and respect they feel toward themself, and the amount of responsibility they accept for their generated outcomes. As personal responsibility appears to incorporate these concepts, these variables offer avenues to investigate as a means of defining personal responsibility. However, while these variables each share similarities with personal responsibility, not one of them singularly captures all the components that the present research program seeks to investigate in its quest to understand personal responsibility. Similarly, combining these variables leaves a gap with regard to defining personal responsibility completely.

While the developing understanding of personal responsibility focuses on the individual, it does so within a social context. Like other forms of moral behaviour, it is predicted that a person who is demonstrating personal responsibility will consider how their choices and behaviour will impact on others in society. This sense of social responsibility cannot be found in the explanations of locus of control, personal agency, self-efficacy, self-concept, self-esteem, self-regulation, and emotional intelligence. As the idea that personal responsibility is lacking in society grows, it is important that society seeks to understand this concept termed personal responsibility. As no current variable in psychological study captures all

the elements proposed to make up personal responsibility, it is essential that the variable articulated be defined and scientifically studied.

Defining the Construct of Personal Responsibility

In the absence of a clear definition of personal responsibility, the researcher has begun to conceptualise the construct by examining theory and research on cognitive and moral development, and by drawing on the related constructs of locus of control, personal agency, self-efficacy, self-regulation, self-concept, self-esteem and emotional intelligence. Further, the developing understanding of the personal responsibility construct has been informed by a popular usage literature, ensuring that the way in which the construct is defined and operationalised is relevant to the society in which we live. Using these sources of information, personal responsibility has been defined as, "the ability to identify and regulate one's own thoughts, feelings and behaviour, along with a willingness to hold oneself accountable for the choices made and the social and personal outcomes generated from these choices." Personal responsibility is considered to have four components. These four components include: (1) an awareness of, and control over, individual thoughts and feelings; (2) an awareness of, and control over, choices made regarding behaviour; (3) a willingness to be accountable for the behaviour enacted and the resulting outcome; and (4) an awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one's behaviour upon others.

These four elements are split into three subsections – metacognition, accountability, and social responsibility. Metacognition involves knowing about

one's own cognitive strategies and monitoring, regulating, controlling and applying

this knowledge (Devlin, 2002). Components (1) and (2) can be understood within

metacognition as they concern cognitive processes, while component (3) focuses

on accountability. Social responsibility involves the autonomous application of

behaviour that serves to benefit others due to internally held principles (Collins,

Gleason, & Sesma, 1997) and is captured in component four. Figure 2.1 provides a

pictorial representation of the components and subsections of personal

responsibility.

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                         ┌──────────────────────────┐
                         │ Personal Responsibility  │
                         └──────────────────────────┘
   ┌───────────────┬───────────────┬───────────────┐
┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐
│ 1.  An   │  │ 2. An    │  │ 3.  A    │  │ 4.  An   │
│ awareness│  │ awareness│  │ willing- │  │ awareness│
│ of, and  │  │ of, and  │  │ ness to  │  │ of, and  │
│ control  │  │ control  │  │ hold     │  │ concern  │
│ over,    │  │ over,    │  │ oneself  │  │ for, the │
│ one's own│  │ choices  │  │ account- │  │ impact   │
│ thoughts │  │ made     │  │ able for │  │ of one's │
│ and      │  │ regarding│  │ the      │  │ behaviour│
│ feelings.│  │ behaviour│  │ behaviour│  │ upon     │
│          │  │          │  │ enacted  │  │ others.  │
│          │  │          │  │ and the  │  │          │
│          │  │          │  │ resulting│  │          │
│          │  │          │  │ outcome. │  │          │
└──────────┘  └──────────┘  └──────────┘  └──────────┘
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| Metacognition | Accountability | Social Responsibility |

Figure 2.1. The Four Components and Three Subsections of the Personal

Responsibility Variable.

It has been demonstrated that adolescents have cognitive and moral capabilities to

demonstrate personal responsibility as it is defined in this dissertation. As

adolescents mature, they are expected to demonstrate personally responsible

behaviour (Hacker, 1994). Entering their final years of schooling, becoming eligible for a driver's licence, and preparing to enter either tertiary education or the workforce generates an expectation from the rest of the community that adolescents will begin to demonstrate a greater depth of personal and social awareness. As the independence afforded to adolescents increases, the responsibility for their choices begins to reside more completely within their own selves (and less with parents, for example).

Studies Examining Personal Responsibility

Previous research on personal responsibility is extremely limited, and the way in which personal responsibility has been defined and operationalised in these studies is not consistent. Therefore, there is no current consensus of what personal responsibility is and how best to explore, measure, and improve it. Previous studies are useful however, as they offer some insight into various aspects of personal responsibility in varying contexts. As the amount of research on personal responsibility is small, it is important to present details from these previous studies.

An early analysis of personal responsibility can be found in Heider's (1958) framework which argued that responsibility is determined on the basis of causality (what was done) and expectations (what should have been done). Incorporating Heider's (1958) framework, Olthof, Ferguson, and Luiten (1989) examined anger and blame reactions in children aged five to 16 years by manipulating the responsibility level of a hypothetical perpetrator. Personal responsibility was said to differ depending on whether an individual caused the harm, had the potential to

avoid the harm, deliberately intended the harm, and whether the individual's motives justified the harm caused. Examining personal responsibility in this way means that responsibility can only be determined after behaviour has occurred, and is judged by those external to the actor.

A study which examined the level of personal responsibility exhibited by children aged from four to 13 years was undertaken by Maruyama, Fraser, and Miller (1982). In this study, personal responsibility was operationalised as the number of candies children donated to a sick child dependent on the level of responsibility that was assigned to them. In one group, no child was identified more or less responsible than any other child in the amount of candies that were donated to the sick child. In the second group, one child was arbitrarily chosen by the experimenter as being responsible for the amount of candies donated by their group. Every child in the final group was assigned equal responsibility for the amount of candy that was donated to the sick child. The results showed that children in the final group donated more candies than children in the other groups. While this study does show a change in behaviour due to the manipulation of personal responsibility, the motivation for the behaviour change could be avoidance of negative repercussions from those who assigned the level of responsibility, and may have very little to do with believing in the value of acting responsibly. This moral action may highlight Kohlberg's (1976) preconventional level where a child does what is right to avoid punishment or receive reward.

With regard to formal education, an area of relevance for this research, a study by Lewis (2004) examined the impact that teacher discipline style had on the students'

level of responsibility and misbehaviour. Twenty-one primary and 21 secondary schools participated in the study, which comprised approximately 600 teachers and 4000 students representing Year 6, 7, 9 and 11. Teachers and students were asked to rate the frequency with which students engaged in responsible and irresponsible classroom behaviours including protecting or negating students' and teachers' rights associated with learning, emotional and physical safety, and property. In order to assess discipline techniques, students indicated the type of strategies most often employed by their teacher, ranging from teachers talking with students about the impact of their behaviour on others to teachers abusing students' right by doing such things as yelling.

The results across all year levels were very similar, showing that teachers who were more likely to talk with their students about their behaviour and involve students in decision making had students who exhibited greater levels of responsibility and less misbehaviour. Conversely, those teachers who relied on aggressive techniques, such as yelling and punishment, had more disruptive and less responsible students in their classrooms. While these results appear to show that teacher discipline techniques can greatly impact on student responsibility and behaviour, it is possible that the direction of the relationship is the reverse. Perhaps, as Lewis (2004) points out, the discipline techniques decided upon by the teacher are a reflection of the type of students they have in their class. Classes with students who predominantly behave and act responsibly may allow and encourage the teacher to use less restrictive and more consultative discipline techniques. Whatever the direction of the relationship, the study highlights an important

connection between the level of responsibility students are willing to take, and the discipline strategies evoked by their teacher.

Examining adult learning, Devlin (2002) investigated whether university students take personal responsibility for their learning. Devlin (2002) argued that students can only take personal responsibility for their learning when they are aware of their own cognitions and can monitor, regulate and control them. While Devlin (2002) does not provide a clear and concise definition of personal responsibility, her article addresses the active willingness of students to enhance their knowledge through their own efforts. In response to the question, "Tell me how you think your learning could be improved?" one third of participants listed changes in their own behaviours and/or attitudes that influenced study and learning. This understanding of personal responsibility highlights a willingness of people to hold themselves accountable for their own actions.

Each of these studies provides valuable information to help inform an understanding of personal responsibility, and highlights the complexity of the construct. However, without a well-defined and consistent operationalisation of personal responsibility, research is limited in the comparisons and conclusions it can draw. Further, a notable absence with previous studies is that they do not explore potential gender differences that may exist. As personal responsibility involves a moral and social component, it is reasonable to assume that gender differences may occur, as they often do with the related constructs of self-esteem and emotional intelligence. This research seeks to fill these gaps in the literature

by operationalising the construct consistently throughout the studies undertaken and analysing for any gender differences that may be present.

It has been argued that adolescents are capable of making mature choices, controlling their behaviour and considering a range of options and outcomes. It must be acknowledged however that adolescents face a raft of difficulties when making important and complex decisions. These challenges include the fact that adolescents may see only either-or choices rather than a range of options (Fischhoff, Crowell, & Kipke, 1999), may be unable to generate a list of options due to inexperience and lack of knowledge (Fischhoff et al., 1999), may underestimate the risks inherent in a situation and overestimate their ability to protect themselves from harm (Cohn, Macfarlane, Yanez, & Imai, 1995), may make choices based on their consideration of their peers reactions (Beyth-Marom, Fischhoff, Jacobs-Quadrel, & Furby, 1991), may underestimate the likelihood of facing negative consequences (Fischhoff et al., 1999; Ganzel, 1999), and may make emotion based decisions without attending to a logical decision-making process (Fischhoff, 1992).

While most studies examining decision-making have used adult participants and focused on cognitive factors (such as deficiencies in the way people think), recent research has begun to examine adolescent decision-making and the role of psychosocial factors (such as deficiencies in social and emotional capability). A study by Cauffman and Steinberg (2000) compared maturity of judgement between 810 high school students and 205 college students by the responses they gave to hypothetical situations. Maturity of judgement was comprised of three

psychosocial factors being responsibility (self-reliance, clarity of identity, and independence), perspective (the likelihood of considering situations from different viewpoints and placing them in broader social and temporal contexts), and temperance (the tendency to limit impulsivity and to evaluate situations before acting). Self-report questionnaires were used to determine participants' levels in these three areas. Results revealed that the three psychosocial factors examined were significant predictors of decision-making, and that older participants demonstrated greater psychosocial maturity. At all ages, individuals who were more psychosocially mature, that is demonstrated high levels of responsibility, perspective, and temperance, were less likely to make anti-social decisions. Interestingly, most developmental growth was found to occur between the ages of 16-19 years, particularly in relation to perspective and temperance. Responsibility however appeared to develop more gradually.

While psychosocial factors such as those discussed above are developing during mid to late adolescence, this does not mean that better decision-making around issues of personal responsibility (or any other area) will automatically occur. Like most things in life, taking a personally responsible approach must be learned. Adolescents need to be exposed to the value of personal responsibility and see this value reflected in key areas of their lives. Encouraging adolescents to analyse their behaviour, to consider the differing choices they make as they mature, to examine their stance on moral issues and to become more familiar with their emotional world and the emotional world of others may help them develop a greater awareness of the decisions they make, their own selves and how they interact with the rest of society (Freedman, 2003; Jensen, 2003).

Socialisation within the home is an ideal way in which adolescents would learn to demonstrate personal responsibility. Ideally, parents would model personally responsible behaviour to their offspring. There may be valid reasons however why this does not occur, such as parental absence or inability. While educators are unable to enter the homes of adolescents and construct a learning environment conducive to enhancing personal responsibility, they are able to do so within the school environment.

Unarguably, schooling is a context in which young people face a plethora of moral situations and decisions (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). In an environment rich in opportunities to continually redefine one's moral stance on a wealth of issues, the challenge to overtly question one's own and others moral choices could be embraced. Research has confirmed that academic success alone does not prepare young people for all the challenges life will pepper them with (Goleman, 1995; Valliant, 1977). Preparing adolescents academically, interpersonally and intrapersonally (an ability to manage one's self) (Delahaye, 2005) may well lead to better-adjusted, well-rounded adults (Cohen & Sandy, 2003; Freedman, 2003; Zins, Elias, & Greenberg, 2003).

A fundamental aim of education is to inspire moral and intellectual growth in children and adolescents (Kohlberg, 1980). As adolescents spend a large amount of their time in schooling, formal education is an important locale in which personal responsibility may be learned. Chapter 3 examines the role of schools in teaching values to students and investigates the successes and failures of the

American values education system. An examination of the place of value-based education in schools, and the concerns and opinions of students, lends support to the need for a Personal Responsibility Program in Australian schools.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW – PART II

Teaching Personal Responsibility in Schools

This chapter examines the complexities around teaching personal responsibility and other values to adolescent school students. The arguments for and against America's "character education" programs; programs that attempt to teach values to students will be explored, alongside the perceptions students' hold of these programs. The Australian position on teaching personal and social responsibility will be highlighted, emphasising comments made by the current Australian Prime Minister, Mr John Howard. In closing, the chapter will articulate the need for an education program that focuses on personal responsibility to be taught in Australian schools, and will outline the research questions proposed in this study.

As the momentum surrounding personal responsibility increases, it is important to investigate whether personal responsibility is being taught in formal education. As schooling is a compulsory requirement enforced by government, society should expect that the school system is teaching children values, ethics and responsibilities that will see them uphold the societal standards expected of them (Connors, 2002). Schools would appear to be an excellent environment in which to teach young people about personal responsibility. Throughout their school days children will experience a range of situations in which they must choose how to respond. Many of these situations will occur close to an adult (teacher) who can use the opportunity to discuss with the students the choices made and the behaviour they exhibit (Ruyter, 2002). DeNatale and Singleton (1999) commented that assisting

children to think critically within the school social environment will encourage students to react to these situations in a constructive manner.

The social standards that are set down within a classroom and the broader school community play a fundamental role in the behaviour of children. Less discipline problems and negative behaviour are seen in children when teachers focus on cooperation and respect of others in the classroom (Lewis, 2004; McArthur, 2002). Teaching about morals, values, responsibility and other essential character traits has been deemed by researchers as equally important as teaching about reading, writing and arithmetic (Brooks & McCarthy, 2001; Connors, 2002; Higgs, 1995; Novick, Kress, & Elias, 2002). Connors (2002) stated that "formal education is a powerful means of extending … our capacity for making informed and rational decisions about the way we want to live, both individually and collectively" (p. 65). As Lewis argued, there are two important reasons for teaching school aged children about personal responsibility. First, it prepares students to make their way into society as responsible and thoughtful citizens. This is surely a desirable outcome of our formal education system. Second, the lack of responsibility in students can lead to disruptions in classes which serve to undermine the learning process for all concerned, and increase the stress and job dissatisfaction levels of teachers. If students are acting irresponsibly, even the best planned lessons can result in minimal educational transmission. Do schools use their power to educate the future leaders of our society how to be responsible for themselves and the society they help create?

The literature that examines the teaching of values to school students varies in the terms used. Within the Australian context, terms such as values education and values-based education dominate. When looking at the American literature, character education is the consistent term used. As these terms all encompass the deliberate teaching of moral positions, values, ideals, notions of citizenship and social and personal responsibility, they are used interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

Character Education

School-based programs that teach personal responsibility and other character building traits are being introduced widely in the United States. A national organisation, the Character Education Partnership (CEP), has been established to assist schools develop and implement what have been termed character education programs. The CEP defines character education as "the deliberate effort by schools, families, and communities to help young people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values" (cited in Muscott & Talis O'Brien, 1999, p.374). A number of states in America have made mandatory the incorporation of character education programs within the curriculum, and the federal Department of Education provided $5.2 million to schools for character education in 1998 (Ferguson, 1999).

Despite the ever-increasing application of character education programs in American schools, the national program is not without criticism. Davis (2003) argued that schools do not scientifically and rigorously test the effectiveness of

their programs. As such, they are unable to accurately determine what changes can be attributed to the programs and if supposed changes are lasting. Similarly, Kohn (2003) asserted that what schools are calling character education is really behavioural manipulation. He argues that adolescents are required to follow directions in order to generate the correct answers. Both these authors agree that any changes to student behaviour would be insincere and therefore short-term.

Supporters of character education programs however defend programs that they say are causing positive behavioural changes in children. Ferguson (1999) argued that while scholarly studies on character education are encouraging if inconclusive, what is more important is that teachers and administrators say their programs work. While Ferguson acknowledged that this data was anecdotal, she contended that its uniformity made it powerful. Indeed, a number of school administrators from across America have reported positive results after implementing character education programs (Brooks & McCarthy, 2001; Weinberger, 1996). Schools with character education programs consistently report increased test scores, decrease in disciplinary problems, higher morale in staff and less conflict between students.

These outcomes however tend to focus on changes external to the students, such as a decline in discipline problems and increased morale in staff. A study by Fertman and Chubb (1992) examined what impact a psychoeducational intervention (the Personal Empowerment Program) would have on outcomes generated by internal characteristics of adolescents; their locus of control and their commitment to extracurricular activities. Fifty-two ninth-grade students participated in the study, with half completing the Personal Empowerment Program and the remaining half

serving as a control group. The Personal Empowerment Program is a short intervention that seeks to develop leadership abilities in adolescents and increase their participation in community and school activities (Lena & Lena, 2004).

Participants of Fertman and Chubb's (1992) study completed self-rating questionnaires regarding their activity involvement and locus of control before and after the intervention. The results showed that after the intervention, those in the experimental group had moved toward a more internal locus of control, while those students in the control group appeared to move toward a more external locus of control. With relation to activity involvement, this remained constant for those in the experimental group but decreased for those in the control group. This study suggested that involvement in the Personal Empowerment Program enhanced the adolescents' commitment to their extracurricular activities. Further, the program appeared to move adolescents toward an internal locus of control, that is, a tendency to take responsibility for one's own actions.

Student Perceptions of Character Education

If the teaching of values such as personal responsibility is indicated to occur in school-based programs, it is beneficial to consider how students may approach these programs and prefer this learning to take place. A study by Romanowski (2003) examined how students felt about the character education program being conducted in their school. One hundred and forty-four Northwest Ohio students from Years 9 to 12 participated in focus groups, semi-structured interviews or spontaneous conversations with researchers. Students were encouraged to express

their experiences, feelings and thoughts about the character education program.

These discussions highlighted that most students agreed with the administrators

that teaching character education to students was a good idea. They acknowledged

the desire of the school faculty to assist the adolescents become better people.

Overwhelmingly however, the adolescents stated that the character traits were

taught at a superficial level, were too simple, and were not relevant to their lives.

The students felt that character education was being forced upon them, and as a

result they reacted with resistance. Large sections of the program revolved around

displaying posters around the school showing various character traits and rote

learning various ideals. Students felt that this approach was insulting to their

intelligence and did not allow for the in-depth discussions they would have

preferred. It was often noted by the adolescents that there was a right answer to the

traits under discussion and they often provided the answer that was required with

very little thought. This criticism echoes Kohn's (2003) sentiment that the

educating of values in these programs is shallow, with adolescents being

manipulated into providing a certain response.

Students perceived hypocrisy in the teachers, noting that teachers would espouse

being respectful to others and follow this up with disrespectful behaviour toward

students. Adolescents, with their honed ability to detect inauthenticity, refused (as

one should hope they would) to swallow this hypocrisy and therefore the lesson

was lost (or indeed a different lesson was learned, that of insincerity). Adolescents

highlighted the importance of making discussions around character traits relevant

to their lives and the context in which they live. Hence, the use of popular culture

media (the example given is a Simpson's video) to discuss character traits was rated as more meaningful than the character education videos developed specifically for the program. What the above reflects is that adolescents do not appreciate being told to suck eggs. They are intelligent beings living in challenging times and facing many complex moral and social issues (Eisenberg & Morris, 2004). Discussions about making responsible choices must sit firmly within this context and respect the wealth of experience and knowledge they possess.

This notion of adolescents as people fully aware of complex moral and ethical issues was explored in a study by Steen, Kachorek and Peterson (2003). Four hundred and fifty-nine students from 20 different high schools in Michigan participated in focus group discussions centring on aspects of character. The researchers found that adolescents not only understood the traits under discussion (wisdom and knowledge, courage, love, justice, temperance, and transcendence), they were passionately vocal about dissecting and debating these character strengths. Interestingly, when asked whether they believed character strengths were innate or could be learned, the overwhelming majority stated that strengths could be learned. They argued the proviso however that this learning was much more effective when it occurred through real life experiences, as opposed to formal education. What adolescents appear to be saying, loud and clear, is that boring classroom discussions about abstract values removed from their life experiences teach them very little. For character education to work, adolescents must be involved in developing the program, the context must contain relevant issues with

rich discussion focusing on real life experiences, and the views of adolescents must be the driving force.

Teaching Personal Responsibility in Australian Schools

The United States has recognised the need to systematically educate its young people about morals, values and responsibility. When examining the Australian literature, database searches to find articles relating to "character education", "values education" or "personal responsibility programs" reveal an absence of information. Prime Minister John Howard recently created controversy when he stated that essential values were not being taught in public schools (Haywood, 2004). The federal secretary of the Australian Education Union, Mr Rob Durbridge (2004), argued that essential values of academic excellence, respect, inclusion, responsibility and participation in the community are embedded within the public school curriculum. So offended was Durbridge by Howard's comments, that he called on voters to show their disapproval by removing the Prime Minister from office at the 2004 federal election. This intense response to the suggestion that public schools are value-neutral highlights that many sectors of society feel that teaching values to students is fundamentally important.

Howard's comments are interesting in light of the fact that his government commissioned a study into values education two years before his comments that showed that most public schools were open to teaching, and many were already teaching, values-based education. On the 19th of July 2002, the then Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Technology, the Hon Brendan

Nelson MP, commissioned a values education study to be undertaken by the

Curriculum Corporation. Utilising support from a dedicated Program Advisory

Committee, the study was directed to explore current values-based education

practices and examine how values education could be improved in order to

generate a National framework with principles upholding good values education.

Highlighting the importance of the study, the Ministerial Council on Education,

Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA] (cited in Zbar et al., 2003)

acknowledged that education should concern itself with building character, and that

doing so can increase students' self-esteem, generate a positive outlook on life,

assist students in making ethical judgements and enhance their sense of social

responsibility. Additionally, MCEETYA highlighted that incorporating values

education into schools is essential as "parents expect schools to help students

understand and develop personal and social responsibilities" (p.10 cited in Zbar et

al., 2003).

The Values Education Study Final Report (Zbar et al., 2003) used qualitative data

obtained from 69 Australian schools. These schools provided reports that

explained and evaluated the current practices they used to teach values, or

explained and evaluated the values education program they had created and

implemented. As expected, schools used a diverse range of methods to incorporate

values education into student learning. Some schools felt that values education

should be incorporated implicitly through modelling and the day-to-day classroom

and school practices. Others felt students should be encouraged to critically

analyse value positions while determining value positions of their own. Yet again

some schools opted for the explicit teaching of a list of set values that had been

previously decided on as fundamentally important, while others used a combination of all approaches.

The study reported that most schools highlighted an increased willingness, within the school and the community, to examine values education explicitly. Many schools articulated a vast amount of goodwill within their communities toward adopting and promoting positive values within values education. Despite the willingness and goodwill of schools and their communities, all schools highlighted that they were hampered in their attempts to deliver values-based education as there was a relative lack of values education resources. Further, the report revealed that while most schools signified positive outcomes for their students as a result of values education, most data was anecdotal and qualitative as few schools had been able to create quantitative measures to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs.

Zbar et al. (2003) gathered additional data on the role of values education using focus groups and an online survey to determine what values parents, teachers and students felt Australian schools should teach. An analysis of the values these groups identified revealed consistent core values to pursue. From these commonalities, the authors proposed 10 key values that schools should use to generate continual discussions regarding values education. These 10 key values were:

- Tolerance and understanding

- Respect

- Responsibility

- Social justice

- Excellence

- Care

- Inclusion and trust

- Honesty

- Freedom

- Being ethical.

As the Federal government, through reports such as this one, demonstrates an interest in not only what values are being taught in schools but also the way in which they are being taught, it must provide the resources for all schools to undertake values education. Indeed, part of the anger sparked by John Howard's comments around public schools not teaching values revolved around the fact that his government continues to increase funding to private schools while keeping the level of funding allocated for public schools constant (Bull & Merkenich, 2004). One may argue that if the Prime Minister feels it is imperative that values such as personal responsibility are taught in public schools, should not his government provide the funding necessary for the creation and implementation of value enriched programs? As the Australian community, from the Prime Minister down, continues to articulate the need for students to make mature choices and demonstrate personally responsible behaviour, and schools continue to highlight the lack of available resources to do so, the time is ripe for the creation and implementation of an education program based on personal responsibility.

Constructivist Approaches to Learning

As personal responsibility focuses on the choices of students, and encourages them to take ownership of their lives, it is essential that the method used to teach this notion align with these principles. Constructivism highlights that students must learn to be self-regulatory and self-aware learners, thus requiring them to be active and engaged with their learning. As teaching students about personal responsibility means asking them to be thoughtful, critical, aware, engaged and accountable, undertaking this task with a constructivist agenda is likely to encourage such behaviours.

For as long as formal education has existed, it has centred on the genuine notion that the learning of students is fundamental. The way in which this learning was thought to occur however has changed dramatically over the years (Campbell & Sherington, 2002). In the past, classroom activities were teacher-driven, and usually consisted of the teacher presenting material to the class in the form of a lecture. It was expected that students would take this information in and then rehash it verbatim. Students were expected to sit still, raise their hands silently when wishing to ask questions, and to take copious notes (Sion, 1999). While this type of teaching does continue to some extent today, there is a greater awareness that students learn better when they are actively involved in the learning process (Gibbons, 2002). Thus the notion of the student-centred active classroom has been developed.

The notion that adolescent learning must be relevant, sophisticated, and student-driven coincides with the constructivist approach to teaching presented by Doolittle and Camp (1999). As an educational theory, constructivism focuses on how learners acquire, manipulate and use knowledge (Airasian & Walsh, 1997). At its core, constructivism contends that all learning occurs through the active cognitive effort an individual asserts during the process of integrating information alongside prior understandings (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). As all incoming information is actively acted on and personalised, it is essential that learning experiences support this active interaction (Terwel, 1999). Teaching is most effective when new knowledge is connected to students' prior understandings and students are guided through relevant discussion and activities. Doolittle and Camp (1999, pp. 33-37) list the following eight factors as essential to supporting student learning.

1. Learning should take place in authentic and real-world environments. This allows adolescents to apply what they are learning to their own lives, and consider situations they may experience from a range of perspectives.

2. Learning should involve social negotiation and mediation. This supports adolescents to develop essential social skills. Further, experiencing situations that may contradict and challenge what an adolescent believes will lead the adolescent to accommodate the differing information, resulting in increased cognitive and moral reasoning.

3. Content and skills should be made relevant to the learner. Not only is this likely to increase the students motivation to learn, but it directly addresses the main function of learning – to enhance our ability to function in our world. Relevant information can be tested and applied directly into one's environment.

4. Content and skills should be understood within the framework of the learner's prior knowledge. Before a student can be advanced in their understanding of any area, it is essential that we understand the knowledge the student already has. With this understanding, the teacher can create experiences that stretch the student's current thinking and lead to greater cognitive sophistication.

5. Students should be assessed formatively, serving to inform future learning experiences. Taking stock of where the student is at throughout the learning process informs our understanding of what the student knows, what is being retained, and how they are benefiting from the information. Formative assessment is necessary if the teacher is to continue creating relevant experiences for the students.

6. Students should be encouraged to become self-regulatory and self-aware. The basis for constructivism is the idea that learners are active in their construction of knowledge and meaning. As learners create their knowledge, it is essential that they develop the ability to regulate their cognitions (plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning and thinking), and have an awareness of their cognitions (knowing what they know and knowing what they are capable of). Developing these skills by discussing and reflecting on these processes allows adolescents to take greater responsibility for their learning.

7. Teachers serve primarily as guides and facilitators of learning, not instructors. Teachers present materials or ideas to the students and engage them in discussions. The teacher is not seen as the person with the information who must get it from her head into her students' heads. Instead, the teacher works to motivate and facilitate the learning of the students. The teacher may support and challenge the students,

but ultimately the students gain a greater awareness through their interaction with the experience facilitated by the teacher.

8. Teachers should provide for and encourage multiple perspectives and representations of content. Becoming familiar with a range of perspectives regarding a single event allows students to develop multiple representations. These multiple representations allow students greater flexibility and expansion in their thinking. They are able to consider many more options than previously. This increases their understanding and ability to adapt and cope with various situations.

Each factor described above highlights the active role of the student in acquiring knowledge. Further, learning is shown to be most effective when it is student-driven, based on real-world experience and encouraging of internal reflection (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). The theory that this type of learning is best for adolescents is supported by the studies of Romanowski (2003) and Steen et al. (2003). These studies, as discussed earlier, highlighted that students prefer to learn through activities that are relevant to their lives and require an appropriate amount of cognitive complexity. Further, adolescents desire to be passionately engaged in dissecting moral concerns, especially when these discussions are based on their real life experiences.

The Present Program of Research

The literature reviewed has established the need for an education program based on personal responsibility. The connections between constructivism and personal responsibility have been identified, showing that teaching in a way that supports

self-regulation and self-awareness in students will enhance the development of personally responsible behaviour. As adolescents develop, their ability to hypothesise, reason about and challenge their own thoughts, feelings and action increases. This heightened cognitive and moral sophistication is likely enhanced by engaging with a program that requires deliberate and scrutinized cognitive and moral consideration.

As personal responsibility has received limited previous research attention, related constructs of locus of control, personal agency, self-efficacy, self-concept, self-esteem, self-regulation and emotional intelligence were drawn on to highlight areas of similarity with the personal responsibility construct. In doing so a succinct definition of personal responsibility was generated, along with the four components considered to encompass the personal responsibility variable (see pages 66 and 67).

An examination of the role of formal education in teaching children about personal responsibility and other values led to an analysis of the American character education system. Character education involves the utilisation of various education programs designed to teach school-aged children about values and morals. The education programs range in techniques used to teach about values, and the feedback from teachers, administrators and researchers as to the value of the programs is inconsistent. The few studies that have been done examining the students' views of character education programs reveal that students feel the programs are simplistic, boring and largely ineffective.

The lack of education programs in Australia that teach about personal responsibility or other values was identified. It was argued that despite the Australian government's stance that values should be taught in public schools, this was largely not occurring. A study commissioned by the government examining the possibility of teaching values in schools highlighted the willingness of schools and communities to deliver such education. Schools and communities were hampered however due to the absence of education programs that focused on responsibility and other values.

Within this context, the goals of the current research program seem warranted. It is essential that the role of personal responsibility in the lives of adolescents is understood, so that an education program can be developed that serves to enhance the potential for students to act personally responsibly. As adolescents begin to make independent choices about the direction of their lives that may have long-term consequences, it is imperative that their education assists them in considering their choices and the responsibility they have for the decisions they make.

Personal responsibility has been presented as an important construct that benefits individuals and society. Formal education may be a fundamental way in which adolescents can learn about personal responsibility. However, little is presently known about personal responsibility in this context. The initial goal of the current research program was to describe and define personal responsibility using input from adolescents and teachers gained through focus groups. Second, using this information, related measures, and relevant literature, a quantitative measure of personal responsibility was developed. Third, a school-based program focusing on

personal responsibility was created, implemented and evaluated in a secondary school. The Personal Responsibility Program was developed using the focus group data, relevant literature and other values-based education programs.

The current research program addresses the following research questions:

- How do adolescents and teachers understand "personal responsibility?"
- Can a quantitative questionnaire define and measure an adolescents' level of personal responsibility?
- Can a program aimed at enhancing the personal responsibility level of adolescents be taught in a high school and demonstrate measurable effect?
- Is there a relationship between personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem?

The following chapter outlines the three studies undertaken to address these research questions and examines the methodological choices made in the current research program.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework and research approach used in this research program. The nature of the design, issues around participant selection, and ethical considerations are examined. The research program is divided into three studies and the qualitative and quantitative measures used in each study are discussed with regard to their selection and analysis. To conclude, a timeline presenting the research program milestones is presented.

Theoretical Framework

Adolescence

For many years the adolescent period, which generally covers the age range 10-18 years (Berzonsky, 2000), has been widely acknowledged to centre on the exploration of the self and one's place in the social world. Advances in cognitive thought, such as the ability to take the perspective of another and consider competing possibilities for a given situation, allow adolescents to consider information from the environment in new and sophisticated ways (Eisenberg & Morris, 2004). Increased metacognitive awareness (the ability to think about one's own thoughts) allows adolescents to challenge and change what they believe. Adolescence has been marked as a period in which young people become passionately interested in moral questions (Gilligan, 1987). Their developing cognitive sophistication enhances their ability to question mightily in the moral domain (Byrnes, 2003). Hacker (1994) contends that the adolescent's ability to

engage abstract thinking capabilities is directed toward establishing a deeper and more profound understanding of their place in the world. For a more detailed discussion on adolescent development, see Chapter 2.

It is the development of cognitive and moral ability that made the adolescent time period of interest in the current research program. The notion of personal responsibility contains complex cognitive and moral understandings, and it was essential that the age group examined were developmentally able to consider and engage with such complexities. As adolescence sees the onset of cognitive and moral sophistication (Kohlberg, 1976; Piaget, 1932), it was thought to be a ripe time to introduce personal responsibility and its components to students. Introducing a complex cognitive and moral concept was thought to encourage adolescents to engage the expanding mental processes that were developing. Additionally, as older adolescents move toward creating their own identity and seeking greater freedom and independence, it was felt that offering them a program that explores these areas would assist them in making these decisions. Making active choices and accepting responsibility for these choices are behaviours that must develop in adolescence (Hacker, 1994). It was felt that teaching the program to adolescents would assist them with decisions that often arise during the adolescent period. A more detailed explanation of the significance of the program to the lives of adolescents can be found in Chapters 2 and 3.

Constructivism

Constructivism is a widely accepted educational theory about how learners acquire, manipulate and use knowledge (Airasian & Walsh, 1997). At its core, constructivism contends that all learning occurs through the active cognitive effort an individual asserts during the process of integrating information alongside prior understandings (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). In order to make meaning out of incoming information, people actively attend to, manipulate, organise, and reject information coming from other people, environmental stimulus, and their own thoughts and feelings. As such, people are not passive recipients of external information (Berlin, 1996). The process of actively selecting and modifying information highlights that what is finally retained from an information exchange is unlikely to be the same for different people. Constructivism thus challenges the viewpoint of a single stable reality (Borgen, 1992).

A constructivist approach to teaching posits that adolescent learning must be relevant, active, sophisticated, and student-driven. In addition, the learning experience must begin with the students' current understandings and guide them through relevant discussion and activities (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). As the present research program sought to uncover the present understandings of adolescents and teachers with regard to personal responsibility (Study 1 – focus groups) and then enhance this understanding using an educational intervention (Study 3 – Personal Responsibility Program), a constructivist approach was embraced. Focus groups offered the researcher insight into the adolescents' current views in the area of personal responsibility, establishing a starting point for the

program that could meet students where they were. As the notion of personal

responsibility is an idea that does not have clearly defined parameters, taking a

constructivist approach allowed adolescents to develop their own meanings with

peers and the researcher/teacher, and to then examine how the construct may fit

into their lives.

The Personal Responsibility Program sought to challenge and change student

notions of personal responsibility. Importantly, constructivist theory highlights that

change through learning is certainly possible. However, it is acknowledged that

core beliefs and assumptions (regarding reality, identity, power/control, and values)

are often extremely difficult to change. As humans actively construct their

knowledge, they can selectively attune to that which supports their deep-seated

beliefs, and disregard or overlook that which challenges them (Mahoney &

Patterson, 1992). In an attempt to counter this, the program used many group

activities where students listened to the viewpoints of other students. Doolittle and

Camp (1999) highlighted that learning should involve social negotiation and

mediation, as experiencing situations that may contradict and challenge what an

adolescent believes will lead the adolescent to accommodate the differing

information, resulting in increased cognitive and moral reasoning.

Sampling Issues

Public Schools

Public schools were chosen as the sites for the current research program. Once the decision was made to examine personal responsibility in the lives of adolescents, it was felt that schools would provide the best access to a wide range of teenagers. Public schools were chosen in order to enhance the diversity of students involved and to learn more about, and give back to, the publicly funded system. As discussed in Chapter 3, Australian public schools have received less than favourable comments from the Prime Minister about their role in values education. Additionally, the Values Education Study Final Report (Zbar et al., 2003) demonstrated that while Australian public schools are willing to embrace values education, there are few programs available to assist this pursuit. As such, it was timely and valuable to create, implement and evaluate a values-based education program.

Participant Selection

Year 11 students were selected to be the participants in the focus groups (Study 1) and the Personal Responsibility Program (Study 3). There were three main reasons why this age group was preferred. First, the literature on adolescent cognitive and moral development (Byrnes, 2003; Keating, 2004; Kohlberg, 1976; Piaget, 1985) showed that the abilities needed to understand, reason about, and incorporate personal responsibility into behaviour were expectations more suitable for

adolescents above the age of 11 years old. Thus Year 11 students, being roughly 15-16 years of age, are developmentally appropriate participants.

Second, as personal responsibility has a moral component and relates to notions of greater freedom and independence, it was felt that older adolescents would find the construct interesting and meaningful. Students in Year 11 tend to desire greater freedom from parents and guardians. As these adolescents begin to make their way in the world, they are choosing who they will become and what they will believe. Allowing them exposure to the concept of personal responsibility, and asking them to debate and discuss the ideas surrounding it, may allow them to make good choices with sound and personally beneficial reasoning. As personal responsibility is about making choices, accepting consequences, holding oneself accountable, and considering the impact of one's choices on others, it was felt that Year 11 students were the appropriate age group and in the relevant life situation, to be interested in and to benefit from a Personal Responsibility Program.

Third, consultations with a number of schools regarding accessing participants continually highlighted Year 11 students as those with the most time available within the school's expectations to undertake the study. Both Year 10 and Year 12 students were focusing on important transitions, and the school personnel felt that introducing extra activities into their curriculum would be unproductive. The school personnel therefore voiced their preference that the study be undertaken with students in Year 11.

Study 2 involved students in Years 9, 10, 11, and 12 from two public schools. As the purpose of this study was to empirically assess the reliability and validity of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire, statistical analyses required large numbers of participants. These adolescents ranged in age from 14-18 and were therefore at an appropriate developmental timeframe to be involved in the study.

Ethical Considerations

As the majority of students involved in the research program were under 18 years of age, ethical considerations regarding parental consent were enforced. For the focus groups conducted in Study 1, students were required to present a signed parental consent form before participating in the focus group. Additionally, the researcher informed students that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to leave at any time. Students were required to sign the same consent form that their parents had signed signalling their understanding that they were providing voluntary consent. For Study 2, the development and refinement of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire, all students took a notice home to their parents that advised of the study. Parents were informed that they were to contact the school if they did not wish their child/ren to participate. Thus passive consent from parents was used for this study. Before completing the questionnaire, students were informed that their consent was voluntary and that they were free to leave at any time. They were provided with an information cover sheet that clearly explained the nature of their voluntary consent. As the school implemented Study 3, the intervention of the Personal Responsibility Program, as part of its curriculum, consent from parents was not required. However all students took a

notice home advising parents that the Personal Responsibility Program would be conducted as part of their normal school day and that any queries relating to this should be directed to the year-level coordinator.

A further ethical consideration was the potential sensitivity of the information offered during Studies 1 and 3. While not overly sensitive, personal information around moral considerations were discussed with the researcher and other students. As such, the researcher advised that while all information discussed in the focus groups/classroom should not be discussed outside these environments, confidentiality could not be guaranteed and therefore only information that students felt comfortable for all students to know should be shared. In addition, students were advised that the Guidance Officer was aware of the research and available to speak to students if any issues of concern arose.

School-Researcher Relationship

The relationship between the schools and the researcher, and the students and the researcher, was an important aspect of the design of this study. Research that involves intervention programs with youth requires a large amount of researcher effort in order to establish and maintain collaborations with schools (Galambos & Leadbeater, 2000). The relationship developed between the researcher and the school/s in the present study was fundamental in enabling the research to be relevant, timely and directly applicable. Positive collaboration allowed for successful recruitment of participants, individual staff participation, allocation of

curriculum time, co-teaching of program lessons between researcher and teachers, and administration of pre- and post-test measures.

Mixed Method Design

This research program involved the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. Combining these methods of data collection has been argued to add depth and necessary complexity to issues that involve adolescence (Galambos & Leadbeater, 2000). As personal responsibility had not been previously defined or consistently conceptualised, it was deemed necessary to initially undertake qualitative research in order to describe and define the variable. Frazer and Lawley (2000) argued that focus groups are far more valuable than surveys when exploring a rarely examined topic. Focus groups with adolescents and teachers conducted in Study 1 (discussed below) were used to explore and expand the researcher's understanding of personal responsibility. The lack of prior research investigating personal responsibility had left the construct without a quantitative measure to assess it. Thus in Study 2 (discussed later in this chapter) it was determined that a quantitative measure would be developed. This measure was borne out of previous literature, data from the focus groups undertaken by the researcher, and other quantitative measures that assess closely related constructs. Morgan (1997) argued that focus groups are a valuable tool for assisting with survey construction.

In Study 3, the construct of personal responsibility was taught in a high school to Year 11 students (discussed later in this chapter). The development of the Personal Responsibility Program was also informed by literature and focus groups. In order

to assess any changes in level of personal responsibility that may be attributed to the program, the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire (developed by the researcher in Study 2), Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Questionnaire and the Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998) were used pre- and post-intervention. Additionally, feedback sheets from students and teachers, and a teacher focus group, provided qualitative data in Study 3. An outline of the mixed method design in presented in Table 4.1.

In order to determine changes in the variables over time, Study 3 used a longitudinal design with three data collection points (Time 1, 2 and 3). Additionally, an experimental and control group design was embraced in order to strengthen the proposition that any changes identified had resulted from exposure to the intervention and were not simply due to adolescent growth and development.

Study 1 - Focus Groups

In Study 1, focus groups were chosen as the appropriate qualitative method in order to explore the way in which adolescents and teachers understand, define and integrate notions of personal responsibility within their experiences (Research Question - *How do students and teachers understand the construct "personal responsibility?"*). Focus groups are informal discussions generated by a moderator who is interested in uncovering the thoughts, ideas, and feelings of a particular group of people (Berg, 2004). The moderator guides the discussion along a semi-structured path, asking flexible questions to a small number of participants. As the

Table 4.1

Outline of Mixed Method Design

Study	Participants	Measures	Purpose	Content
Study 1	Volunteer students from Year 11. Volunteer teachers across all year levels.	Focus group discussions.	To explore and define how adolescents and teachers perceive personal responsibility.	Scenario and questions about personal responsibility.
Study 2	All Years 9-12 students.	100-item Personal Responsibility Questionnaire	To determine a succinct and statistically valid Personal Responsibility Questionnaire for use with adolescents	Quantitative measure was administered examining aspects of personal responsibility.
Study 3	All Year 11 students.	30-item Personal Responsibility Questionnaire (developed by researcher), The 33-item Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998), The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965).	To determine the current level of personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem of Year 11 students and to examine whether any change has occurred after exposure to the intervention (the Personal Responsibility Program).	Quantitative measures were administered at Times 1, 2, and 3 (for Experimental Group just before, after, and four months after intervention; for Control group four months before, just before, and just after the intervention).
	All Year 11 students (Experimental Group Term 2, Control Group Term 3).	Intervention (the Personal Responsibility Program).	To teach adolescents about personal responsibility and have them reflect on their own life choices.	Five lessons delivered fortnightly focusing on choices and consequences, emotional awareness, rights and responsibilities and social responsibility.
	Year 11 students in Experimental Group.	Feedback sheets.	To further evaluate the success of the intervention.	At the end of each lesson students were given a sheet with questions asking for comments on the lesson.
	Teachers who implemented the program with the Experimental Group.	Feedback sheets and focus group.	To further evaluate the success of the intervention.	At the end of each lesson teachers were given a sheet with questions asking for comments on the lesson. At the end of the intervention teachers were asked questions about the success of the lessons and the nature of the program in a focus group.

focus group consists of a number of people (usually under 10), group dynamics allow for an interesting and fruitful examination of the topic under discussion. The main aim of the focus group is to give emphasis to the participants' subjective understanding of the world. Therefore, focus groups are used successfully when attempting to uncover the ways in which others understand and incorporate ideas and concepts into their lives (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

A particular benefit of the use of focus groups was that they offered the researcher a way to understand the language used to discuss, and the meaning ascribed to, the concept of personal responsibility in the lives of adolescents and teachers. It was felt that generating an informal discussion among a group of four or five adolescents and teachers would encourage these groups to speak openly and freely about the topic at hand. With respect to adolescents, focus groups are highlighted as a valuable way in which to gain information on the behaviours, attitudes, and opinions of young people, due to their informal nature and flexible format (Berg, 2004). As adolescents were the group who would be expected to complete the Personal Responsibility Program, it was important that they be consulted on their understandings of personal responsibility and its impact on their lives. Cook-Sather (2003) argued that students are often not consulted about the learning they are expected to undertake. It was felt that embracing student views on the notion of personal responsibility in focus groups would enhance student receptivity to the Personal Responsibility Program when implemented. While the same students who participated in the focus groups would not be undertaking the program, explaining the prior participation of students was expected to generate openness among the students toward the program's implementation.

Moderate levels of researcher involvement were used in each focus group, with the researcher allowing free discussion and guiding participants through predetermined questions. Each focus group began with the same scenario that placed personal responsibility within a context easily relatable to adolescents. It was expected that adolescents would not have thought very deeply, if at all, about the notion of personal responsibility, nor have attempted to tease out how it impacts on everyday aspects of their lives. Morgan (1997) argued that focus groups are beneficial when exploring topics that are either habit-ridden or not thought out in detail. The same questions were asked in all focus groups, allowing the researcher to guide the discussion and compare responses across groups during analysis. However, as it was deemed important to follow the ideas presented by the young people and the teachers, ideas not previously considered by the researcher were followed through and discussed. In this way each focus group followed a slightly different path. Further, it was felt that participants generated greater ideas and insight by listening to, and debating with, each other. Indeed, focus groups are often used for the dynamic interactions and depth of information they generate (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000).

The use of focus groups afforded a rich insight into how adolescents and teachers define personal responsibility, thus offering the researcher avenues to explore for definitions and components of personal responsibility that were relevant to the demographic who would be participating in the Personal Responsibility Program. Further, Morgan (1997) noted that focus group data can aid in the development of survey construction. This data can serve to highlight domains that need to be

examined, help determine the parameters within which domains may occur and provide item wordings that assist the researcher in conveying meaning to the survey respondents. A further goal of the focus group discussions in Study 1 was to identify information that would guide the development of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire in Study 2 and inform the Personal Responsibility Program in Study 3.

Analyses of Focus Group Data

The process of analysing the focus groups in this program followed Krueger's (1998) method of focus group analysis. Perceptions and understandings are usually captured through focus groups by audiotaping the discussion and later transcribing the content. The process of transcribing the interaction serves to highlight common words, ideas and descriptions within and across groups. Krueger's (1998) "content analysis continuum model" highlighted that transcribing focus group discussions verbatim allows for conceptually similar views to become more apparent and thus be grouped together. Three factors, known as "group-to-group validation" serve to guide the decision making process around which topics should receive the most emphasis. These factors include determining how many groups mentioned the topic (across group analysis), how many people within each group mentioned the topic (within group analysis), and how much energy and enthusiasm the topic generated among the participants. Using group-to-group validation means that particular topics of interest for the researcher are those that were mentioned and discussed with interest by a number of group members across a number of groups. Additionally, in order to add to the richness and complexity of data, themes that

may serve to highlight differences among groups may also be included. After such a thorough analysis of the focus group data, obvious key themes can be created.

In the current program verbatim transcripts from the focus group discussions were analysed using Krueger's (1998) content analysis methodology. Each transcript was systematically analysed to uncover words and concepts that illuminated the understandings of personal responsibility as articulated by participants. Key words and concepts were recorded along with the number of times they were mentioned within each group and across groups (Krueger, 1998). Large similarities between teachers and adolescents aided the analyses. This allowed for an obvious emergence of the dominant themes within which to organise personal responsibility. These themes were further refined in order to answer the research question. Chapter 5 provides an in-depth analysis of the focus group data.

Study 2 – Development of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire

The final 30-item Personal Responsibility Questionnaire was created using data collected in Study 2. As the construct of personal responsibility had not been previously defined or widely studied, there was no quantitative measure available to explore the construct. As an aim of the present research program was to enhance the level of knowledge adolescents have regarding this construct (Study 3), it was imperative that a measure be available in order to assess level of personal responsibility of adolescents before and after the intervention (the Personal Responsibility Program). Therefore the researcher developed an initial 100-item quantitative measure of personal responsibility, which was tested during Study 2 of

the research program (Research Question – *Can a quantitative questionnaire define and measure an adolescent's level of personal responsibility?*)

In developing this scale, Hinkin's (1998) first four steps in questionnaire creation were followed. These four steps, being item generation, questionnaire administration, initial item reduction, and confirmatory factor analysis, were followed in order to provide evidence of the construct validity of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire – the extent to which the scale measures what it is professed to measure (Huck, 2004). Further detail is provided in Chapter 6.

Item Generation

The relevant literature was thoroughly reviewed to ensure that an appropriate and statistically sound measure of personal responsibility did not exist (Mertens, 2005). While an existing measure of personal responsibility was not found, the literature provided insight into similar research that had preceded the current study, and therefore identified potential pitfalls and opportunities (Creswell, 2005). Thus an immersion in this literature served to enhance the creation of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire. Additionally, the focus group data offered key themes and domains around which to structure the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire. A number of items in the measure were drawn directly from quotes made by the participants during the focus groups, allowing the measure to be relevant to the lives and language of adolescents (Morgan, 2004). As personal responsibility shares similarities with a range of closely related constructs (such as self-regulation and locus of control), a number of items were drawn from related

measures. By incorporating literature, focus group data and relevant measures, a 100-item questionnaire examining aspects of personal responsibility was created. As the construct was exploratory, it was felt that starting with a large number of items would ensure that those items remaining after appropriate statistical analyses were conducted would be robust (see Chapter 6 for further detail).

Peer Review

In line with recommendations provided by Frazer and Lawley (2000), the draft 100-item measure was submitted to an expert panel of three for consideration. It is essential to review the questionnaire with colleagues as they can objectively determine whether the measure can fulfil the study objectives (Frazer & Lawley, 2000). Feedback from the panel led to slight adjustments with the measure that served to enhance its applicability to the current study (see Chapter 6 for further detail).

Questionnaire Administration

Coakes and Steed (2003) highlight that an appropriate sample size for survey instruments is five participants per variable. Thus the 100-item Personal Responsibility Questionnaire was administered as a pilot to more than 500 adolescents. This aspect of the design of the measure is described in more detail in Chapter 6.

Analysis of Questionnaire

Answers to the questionnaire were rated on a four-point Likert scale measuring aspects of personal responsibility. Participants were asked to rate whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed with 100 statements that examined cognitive, emotional and behavioural choices. Results from the questionnaires were analysed using SPSS and AMOS in order to determine whether the measure was valid and reliable.

As a goal of the current study was to explore the structure of the personal responsibility construct, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and reliability analysis in the form of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha including item total correlation) were performed. Factor analysis is used to reduce a large number of items into a smaller set of underlying factors (Hinkin, 1998). This analysis allowed the researcher to determine what items were grouping together in order to assist with the creation of underlying factors that may be present (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Additionally, the use of EFA allowed the researcher to determine whether items were tapping into the same construct. This process was essential for establishing the validity of the questionnaire (Coakes & Steed, 2003). As it was essential to determine which items should be retained in the final version of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was used. This allowed the researcher to choose only those items that statistically contributed to the test as a whole (Huck, 2004). Cronbach's alpha is recommended when used in conjunction with factor analysis (Cortina, 1993).

Following these steps resulted in a 51-item measure of Personal Responsibility. In order to further refine the factors and to establish the goodness of fit of the final factors, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted. Year 11 students from one private high school completed the 51-item Personal Responsibility Questionnaire in order for the CFA to be conducted (for more detail, refer to Chapter 6). According to Hinkin (1998), a CFA is an essential aspect of the scale development process as it allows for a quantifiable assessment of the factor structure, provides further evidence of construct validity and enables a qualification of the goodness of fit for each factor. In addition, the process of the CFA for each factor provides an opportunity to further refine each factor by deleting items that are not contributing to the factor (Hinkin). Undertaking the statistical tests discussed generated a 30-item Personal Responsibility measure (full detail of all aspects of the process is provided in Chapter 6).

Study 3 – Personal Responsibility Program

Study 3 involved the implementation of the Personal Responsibility Program (the intervention) in 2005 with all Year 11 students at two points in time (experimental group in term 2 and control group in term 3) and the administration of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire (developed by researcher), the Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) at three points in time (Research Questions – *Can a program aimed at enhancing the personal responsibility level of adolescents be taught in a high school and demonstrate measurable effect?* and *Is there a relationship between personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem?*) Thus the design

of Study 3 was pre-post questionnaire quasi-experimental intervention, in two parts.

Creation of Program

The intervention, a five-lesson Personal Responsibility Program, was developed using key themes identified through related literature and the focus group data. Additionally, values-based education programs were examined to provide activity ideas. Each lesson focused on a key theme, and three or four activities were created that examined this theme. In order to cater for different learning styles, a range of activities were used including individual work, group work, class discussions, watching video segments and role-play. Chapter 7 provides a summary of the activities used in the Personal Responsibility Program. Each lesson consisted of activities designed to encourage students to reflect upon their own ideas, and a lesson plan was provided for teachers that clearly identified the aims and objectives of each activity.

The Personal Responsibility Program sought to empower youth through their active involvement (Galambos & Leadbeater, 2000). The program was centred on a constructivist approach to teaching and learning, allowing the teacher to provide stimuli for student learning and to guide student discovery, while students uncovered and explored their own beliefs and opinions (Berlin, 1996). In order to make the program relevant to the lives of adolescents, a central tenet of constructivist teaching (Doolittle & Camp, 1999), popular culture resources were incorporated. A number of researchers contend that the use of popular culture in classrooms serves to reengage students in their leaning (Allender, 2004; Callahan

& Low, 2004; Evans, 2004). Biggs and Moore (1993) have argued that the use of popular culture resources is particularly useful when teaching material that may be perceived as boring. As personal responsibility involves an examination of one's self and grappling with complex concepts, it was felt that students might grapple with the content and potentially "turn off" their attention. Thus the use of popular culture was embraced.

Before implementation, the program was reviewed by two academics in the Faculty of Education at the Queensland University of Technology (one who had previously taught adolescents in a secondary school). This allowed for slight refinements to each lesson plan, such as providing timeframes for each activity. Additionally, a list of resources needed for each activity was included with each lesson plan. These resources were created by the researcher and included handout sheets, role-play scenarios and overhead transparencies. The suggestion was made that each lesson could include 10-minutes at the end where students and teachers provide qualitative feedback on the lesson. This feedback was expected to add to the quantitative data sought through the questionnaire completion that occurred as part of this study (discussed later in this chapter). This idea was incorporated into the final version of the Personal Responsibility Program. For a more detailed discussion on the creation of the program, refer to Chapter 7.

The Teaching of the Program

Due to time demands, school preference, and student availability, teachers from the high school delivered the Personal Responsibility Program in pre-existing form

classes. Four of the seven Year 11 form classes (experimental group) undertook the program in Term 2 (April-June), with the remaining three form classes (control group) undertaking the program in Term 3 (July-September). To assist with conformity and ease of delivery, the researcher held two one-hour training sessions (at the beginning of Term 2 for the experimental group teachers, and at the beginning of Term 3 for the control group teachers) during which the program and its rationale were explained to teachers. To assist the teachers in delivering the material presented, the researcher rotated between the form classes during the length of the program's implementation. Additionally, each lesson contained a lesson script that clearly delineated the aims, key themes, and purpose for each activity. The rotation of the researcher throughout the form classes, and the lesson plan scripts that accompanied and clarified every lesson, led to increased conformity in delivery of the Personal Responsibility Program. As the research aimed to determine whether the Personal Responsibility Program had any impact on adolescents' levels of personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem, it was important that a somewhat consistent program was delivered.

Implementation and Evaluation of the Program

The Personal Responsibility Program was implemented in one public high school. The program was implemented twice, with the first implementation occurring during Term 2 with four Year 11 form classes (April – June 2005, experimental group) and the second implementation occurring during Term 3 with the remaining three form classes (July – September 2005, control group). As the study sought to establish whether the intervention had any impact on a range of variables, it was

essential that a control group be available for comparison. This allowed the researcher to determine whether any changes in the experimental group after undertaking the program could be attributed to the program and not normal developmental changes. As the control group did not undertake the program during the first implementation, it was deemed ethically necessary to expose them to the program during the second implementation.

In order to evaluate the Personal Responsibility Program, a pre-post design with experimental and control groups was used for this study. All Year 11 students (experimental and control group) completed all questionnaires (Personal Responsibility Questionnaire (developed by researcher), Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) at three points in time (Times 1, 2 and 3). The experimental group completed the questionnaires before and after doing the program, and again four months after they had completed the program (Times 1, 2 and 3). This allowed for any immediate and long-term changes in the level of personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem exhibited by the adolescents in the experimental group to become apparent, and allowed for comparisons against those students in the control group. The control group completed the questionnaires four months before undertaking the program and pre- and post-intervention (Times 1, 2 and 3). See Table 4.2 for the timeframe of program implementation and questionnaire completion.

A further evaluation of the intervention occurred using qualitative feedback from the students and teachers who participated in the program during its first

implementation. Students and teachers completed slightly different feedback sheets at the end of every lesson. The student feedback sheets asked specifics about the lesson just undertaken, such as what had worked well, what had challenged them during the lesson, what was something new they had learnt in the lesson and any other comments they wished to make. The teacher feedback sheets focused more on student outcomes, asking what had worked well, what were some interesting comments that students made during the lesson, what examples were given by students during the activities and any other comments they wished to make. In order to gather specific information on the implementation of the program, teachers were assembled for a final focus group at the completion of the program's initial implementation. It was felt that gaining qualitative feedback, in addition to the quantitative feedback gathered through the surveys, would expose areas of change that the surveys alone may not capture. Additionally, this qualitative data could serve to reinforce changes and trends noted in the quantitative data. Following the constructivist underpinning of this dissertation, the use of qualitative data in Study 3 was desired to gain rich feedback from the adolescents and teachers about their experience with the program. An examination of this data can be found in Chapters 7 and 8.

As the researcher was closely involved in implementing the intervention, it was deemed valuable to examine her reflections on the success of the program's implementation and design. Patton (1999) noted that intervention research allows the researcher to identify change not only in the participants undertaking the research, but also in the processes used in the intervention itself. By working closely with students throughout the intervention process, observing their responses

and one's own, and reflecting on outcomes and feedback gained after the program's completion, the researcher gains valuable insight into their own work (Fook, 1996). As such, a discussion of the researcher's reflections on the program's success is included in Chapter 7.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires provide a valuable source of information and were used in Study 3 to invite participants to rate, on a four-point Likert scale, their level of personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem. As the participants received the questionnaires at three points in time (Times 1, 2 and 3), it was essential that the measures were counterbalanced to help minimise practice and fatigue effects (Cozby, 2004). As such the questionnaires were presented in a random order at each sitting.

While the program specifically targeted personal responsibility, it was felt that closely related concepts of emotional intelligence and self-esteem might also be enhanced through undertaking the program. Previous research with adults has shown positive correlations between levels of self-esteem and levels of emotional intelligence ($r = .57$) (Schutte, Malouff, Simunek, McKenley, & Hollander, 2002). Thus it was important to consider whether the same relationships among these variables would be found with adolescents, and what relationship personal responsibility demonstrated with both self-esteem and emotional intelligence in adolescents. This knowledge may allow for increased understanding as to the relationships among these variables, and to personal responsibility itself.

Additionally, it was felt that further validity would be added to the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire if it showed correlations with these measures.

The Personal Responsibility Questionnaire. In this program the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire (developed by the researcher) was used pre- and post-intervention to measure changes in adolescent levels of personal responsibility. Personal responsibility has been defined in the current program as "the ability to identify and regulate one's own thoughts, feelings and behaviour, along with a willingness to hold oneself accountable for the choices made and the social and personal outcomes generated."

The Personal Responsibility Questionnaire is a 30-item measure that asks participants to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement on a four-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree). Participants were asked to circle the response that appears true of them most of the time. A high score on this measure indicates a high level of personal responsibility. Psychometric analyses undertaken by the researcher as part of Study 2 have shown the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire to consist of two factors, each with robust internal consistency (factor 1 "Self control of emotion and thoughts" α = .87, i = 17, factor 2 "Self control of behaviour" α= .79, i = 13). For more detail on the development and psychometric analysis of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire, refer to Chapter 6.

The Emotional Intelligence Scale. The concept of emotional intelligence was developed by Mayer and Salovey (1995) and involves the interplay of

emotional experiences and cognitive processes. Emotional Intelligence has been defined as "the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; [and] the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge" (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p.10). As adolescents develop, their emotional skills become highly important as their emotional experiences and understandings become more complex (Arnett, 1999). Faced with more challenging emotional situations, such as how to relate in intimate relationships, adolescents will draw upon the skills they have.

In the present program, the Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998) was used pre- and post-intervention to measure changes in adolescent levels of emotional intelligence. Internal consistency for the emotional intelligence measure has been reported at $\alpha = .90$ (Schutte et al., 1998). With regard to convergent validity, Schutte et al. (1998) reported that the emotional intelligence scale was positively correlated with the positive subscales of the Trait-Meta Mood Scale, such as attention, clarity and mood repair, and negatively related to pessimism, as measured by the pessimism scale of the Life Orientation Test, depression, as measured by the Zung Depression scale, and impulsivity, as measured by the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale. Research undertaken by Schutte et al. (1998) and Ciarrochi et al. (2001) highlighted that the Emotional Intelligence Scale is a reliable and valid measure when used with adolescents. As such, it was included in the current research program.

The Emotional Intelligence Scale is a 33-item measure that asks participants to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement on a four-point scale

(1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree). Participants were asked to circle the

response that appears true of them most of the time. Items 5, 28 and 33 were

negatively worded and therefore reversed scored before analysis. Thus a high

score on this measure indicates a high level of emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is an important area to study in relation to adolescents due

to the role emotional awareness plays in life success (Mayer et al., 2000; Palmer et

al., 2002). Goleman (1995) argues that emotional intelligence predicts as much as

80% of a person's success in life. There is however a resounding lack of research

on emotional intelligence in relation to adolescents (Petrides & Furnham, 2000).

Of the few studies that have examined emotional intelligence in adolescents, most

have explored and reported significant gender differences (Ciarrochi et al., 2001;

Devi & Rayulu, 2005; Harrod & Scheer, 2005). Thus the present study will add to

the growing body of research on adolescent emotional intelligence and examine

potential gender differences.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Adolescence is a key time in which

one's sense of self is developing. As adolescents negotiate the increasing

complexities of their lives, they begin to form a picture of who they are (their self-

concept) and assess this perception affectively (their self-esteem). Self-esteem has

been defined as how one feels about oneself, including one's sense of self-worth

and self-respect (Rosenberg, 1985). Global self-esteem in adolescents has been

shown to correlate positively with academic performance (Rosenberg et al., 1989),

and negatively with juvenile delinquency (Kaplan, 1980; Rosenberg et al., 1989),

and psychological depression (Rosenberg, 1985; Rosenberg et al., 1989; Wylie, 1979).

In this research program, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) was used pre- and post-intervention to measure changes in adolescent levels of self-esteem. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) measures global self-esteem and is considered one of the best scales for measuring global self-esteem among adolescents (Dukes & Martinez, 1994). As such, it was included in current research program.

The Self-Esteem Scale is a 10-item measure that asks participants to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement on a four-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree). Participants were asked to circle the response that appears true of them most of the time. Items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 were negatively worded and therefore reversed scored before analysis. Thus a high score on this measure indicates a high level of self-esteem. This scale has been found to have good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .86 (Ciarrochi et al., 2001) and one-week test-retest reliability of .82 (Fleming & Courtney, 1984). This scale has demonstrated positive correlations with other measures of self-esteem and negative correlations with measures of maladjustment and unhealthy perfectionism (Fleming & Courtney, 1984; Rosenberg, 1965; Stumpf & Parker, 2000).

Previous research with adults has shown positive correlations (.57) between levels of self-esteem and levels of emotional intelligence (Schutte et al., 2002). Thus it is interesting to consider whether the same relationship among these variables would be found with adolescents, and what relationship personal responsibility

demonstrates to both self-esteem and emotional intelligence in adolescents. This knowledge allows for increased understanding as to the relationships among these variables, and provides further validation of the newly developed Personal Responsibility Questionnaire. As self-esteem is a key area that develops during adolescence, and correlates with many key areas in one's life (such as academic achievement and depression) it is essential that the area be examined. Additionally the current research program seeks to add to the often conflicting literature examining adolescent gender differences in self-esteem (Baldwin & Hoffmann, 2002; Bolognini et al., 1996; Chubb et al., 1997; Harper & Marshall, 1991; Mullis & Mullis, 1992; Thornberg & Jones, 1982).

Study 3 Issues

Questionnaires. A total of 184 Year 11 students participated in the Personal Responsibility Program. As a main aim of this study was to determine changes that occurred in the variables over time, it was essential that only those students who completed the questionnaires on more than one occasion were included. As such, only students who had completed the questionnaires at two or three points in time were considered, leaving 99 students. On closer analysis it was shown that some of these 99 students had data at two time points that did not offer useful information. It was decided that including students who did not have a complete data set would jeopardise the integrity of the research and lead to potential misinterpretations in the results. Therefore, only students who had completed the questionnaires at all points in time (Time 1, 2, and 3) were included in the final sample. This left a total of 83 students.

The deletion of incomplete data sets did limit the number of participants and create small sample sizes. This was unavoidable however, as including incomplete data sets, or generating mean scores for questionnaires when they were missing, would have corrupted the data. While mean substitution can be used when a small number of items on a questionnaire are left unanswered (Coakes & Steed, 2003), it would not be appropriate to substitute means for every item on a measure and then add these means together and use the total as a individual's total score on a measure.

A further reduction in sample size occurred when dividing the sample by gender. As such, initial analyses were undertaken with gender combined. However these analyses produced no significant results, and an examination of the data set highlighted that there were variations in mean results based on gender. Schwalbe and Staples (1991) contend that cultural rules and roles likely lead to gender differences in variables examining emotional understanding, self regard and personal control. Therefore it was decided that conducting tests with separate gender analyses would potentially offer useful information.

Repeated Measures MANOVAs were used to analyse the quantitative results. MANOVA was chosen as it allows for the complexity of comparing a number of dependent variables (personal responsibility factor 1, personal responsibility factor 2, self-esteem and emotional intelligence) across time (Time 1 to Time 2) with separate gender analyses. Due to past research reporting significant gender differences on the variables of emotional intelligence and self-esteem (Baldwin &

Hoffmann, 2002; Block & Robins, 1993; Bolognini et al., 1996; Ciarrochi et al., 2001; Devi & Rayulu, 2005; Harrod & Scheer, 2005), analyses took gender into account. As the study was designed with two different groups undertaking the intervention at two different times, separate MANOVAs were used to analyse the results.

Feedback from Teachers and Students. Teacher and student feedback was sought for two purposes: to strengthen the data provided by the questionnaires and to determine the success of the program's design and implementation. With regard to analysis of the teacher focus group, a process similar to that used in Study 1 was undertaken (discussed earlier in this chapter). A verbatim transcript of the focus group was analysed for words, phrases and concepts that were mentioned by a number of people in the group and that aroused passionate discussion. These words were listed and key themes began to emerge. The focus group focused on the teachers' experiences of implementing the program, how valuable they found the program, and if they felt that their students had benefited from undertaking the program. Their responses added to the examination of the design and implementation process of the program discussed in Chapter 7.

While the student and teacher feedback sheets provided written feedback, a similar process of analysis applied. Each feedback sheet was perused and comments were recorded on a large piece of cardboard. Gradually, similar comments began to emerge and these could be grouped together. This process was continued and refined and a succinct number of categories were created that highlighted the main ideas and perceptions of the adolescents and teachers who had undertaken the

program. The teachers' perceptions were added to the findings from the focus group and included in the discussion in Chapter 7. The feedback from the adolescents was divided into two main areas. The first area highlighted the students understanding and consideration of the key themes presented in the program (such as choices, consequences, social responsibility), and their consideration of the design of the program, and is discussed in Chapter 7. The second area presented the learning that was occurring through students' questioning of their current beliefs and tentatively offering new insights. This aspect of the student feedback is discussed in Chapter 8.

The present research program used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to explore in-depth a largely unexamined construct. A longitudinal design with an experimental and control group was used, furthering strengthening the overall research program. Table 4.2 provides a timeline identifying the research program milestones and in doing so highlights the research methods employed in the research program.

Table 4.2

Timeline Identifying Program Milestones

Month	Study	Research Milestones
July – Sept 2004	Study 1	Focus group discussions. Audiotapes transcribed and analysed. Findings generated themes within which to define and understand personal responsibility. Informed Study 2 and Study 3.
Nov – Feb 2005	Study 2	Creation of the 100-item Personal Responsibility Questionnaire. Students in Years 9, 10, 11 and 12 completed the questionnaire. Statistical analysis performed, resulting in a 30-item measure.
Dec – March 2005	Study 3	Creation of the Personal Responsibility Program.
March	Study 3	*Pre-intervention (T1)* All questionnaires (Personal Responsibility, Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem) completed by Year 11 students.
April	Study 3	Training on the implementation of the Personal Responsibility Program with teachers of the experimental group.
April – June	Study 3	Implementation of the Personal Responsibility Program with four of seven Year 11 form classes (experimental group). Feedback sheets completed at end of each lesson by students and teachers.
July	Study 3	*Immediately post-intervention (for experimental group) (T2)* *Pre-intervention (for control group) (T2)* All questionnaires (Personal Responsibility, Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem) completed by Year 11 students.
July	Study 3	Focus group with teachers of experimental group discussing success of implementation.
July	Study 3	Training on the implementation of the Personal Responsibility Program with teachers of control group.
July-Oct	Study 3	Implementation of the Personal Responsibility Program with the remaining three Year 11 form classes (control group).
Oct	Study 3	*Four month follow up (for experimental group) (T3)* *Immediately post-intervention (for control group) (T3)* All questionnaires (Personal Responsibility, Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem) completed by Year 11 students.
Dec-April 2006	Study 3	Data analysed – questionnaires, student and teacher feedback sheets, and teacher focus groups.

CHAPTER 5: STUDY 1 FOCUS GROUPS

As discussed in Chapter 4, a goal of the current study was to examine how adolescents and teachers understand personal responsibility. As such, focus groups were used with both groups. Focus groups have been highlighted as an excellent way to access the words, ideas and views of a select group, particularly adolescents (Morgan, 2004). Additionally, Richie et al. (1997) acknowledge focus groups to be particularly useful when examining constructs that have received limited previous attention. This chapter describes and examines the focus group data obtained from 20 Year 11 students and 10 teachers at two high schools. This data is structured around the main themes that emerged from these focus groups, thus providing parameters around which to enclose and illuminate the construct of personal responsibility.

Study 1 addressed the following research question, *"How do students and teachers understand 'personal responsibility?'"* For ease of understanding, the reporting of these two groups of participants (students and teachers) will be kept separate. Student information will be presented first, followed by that of the teachers.

Students

Participants. Twenty Year 11 high school students drawn from two public high schools in the south-eastern part of Queensland, Australia participated in the study. The genders were not equally represented, with almost twice as many

female participants than male (F = 13, M = 7). All participants were aged either 15 or 16 years of age. The schools were suburban and based in a large city.

Focus group interview schedule. The researcher developed a range of questions pertaining to personal responsibility based on previous reading and related research as reported in Chapters 2 and 3 (see Appendix A). The focus group sessions were opened with a scenario deemed relevant to the lives of Year 11 students. The aim of this scenario was to assist the understanding of personal responsibility held by the participants. As personal responsibility is a concept that is difficult to pin down and may not be easily understood by some adolescents, it was deemed valuable to situate the construct within a familiar situational setting. The scenario was as follows:

"You are at a party and it is 11.30pm. You know that you have to be home by midnight or you will get in trouble with your parents. A good friend of yours asks you to go for a walk with her/him and some other people that you don't know. You are aware that if you stay with your friend you will be home late. However, you do not wish to leave your friend alone with strangers. Therefore, you make the decision to stay with your friend and you do not contact your parents to let them know you'll be late. When you do arrive home, your parents are waiting and angry. After you explain what has happened they state that you have broken the rules and that you will be grounded for a month."

- *In the above scenario, what choices have been made?*

- *How do you feel about your parent's reaction and how do you respond?*

- *How do you feel about the outcome (being grounded)?*

Examples of questions asked throughout the focus groups include, *"If you broke personal responsibility down into its key parts, what would they be?"* and *"What in your life do you take personal responsibility for?"*

     Procedure. Before entering the high schools, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the university and the relevant education authority. The researcher either spoke at a Year 11 assembly or attended individual Year 11 classes to recruit participants. Students were asked to voluntarily participate in a focus group discussion examining personal responsibility that would occur within the next fortnight during class time on school premises. As an incentive to participate, students were informed that those who participated would receive soft drinks, chocolates, and chips during the focus group session.

Fifteen participants were sought from each school and this number was reached through voluntary participation. While only 10 participants were needed from each school to complete the study, five extra students were provided with permission slips in the event that not all students returned their forms. The researcher collected the names of those students who volunteered and provided them with an information sheet and parent consent form (see Appendices B and C). The names of these students were accessible only to the researcher and the Guidance Officer or year level coordinator. Students were advised that without one parent's permission they would not be able to participate in the study, and were alerted to return their permission slip to either the Guidance Officer or the year level coordinator. When students returned their permission slips they were advised as to the time and date of their session. The Guidance Officer and the appropriate year level coordinator

approached students who had not returned their permission slips requesting they do so until the necessary number of participants was satisfied.

Nine students participated from one school with the remaining 11 students coming from the other school. The Guidance Officer or year level coordinator assembled the students outside the room where the focus groups were to take place and provided the researcher with the appropriate signed consent forms. All students were greeted by the researcher and moved into the room. A small amount of time was spent introducing the researcher to the students and the students to each other. The rules of the focus group were explained, including respecting each person's right to speak and the need for confidentiality. It was explained to students that all results published by the researcher would not identify them in any way. Further, their role in maintaining the confidentiality of their fellow group members was discussed, and it was stressed that information shared inside the room should not be discussed with anyone outside the room. While students were encouraged to maintain confidentiality, it was acknowledged that the researcher could not ensure this confidentiality would be kept, and they were therefore to only disclose that which they felt comfortable being known by all students. Students were informed that they were going to be asked around ten questions examining personal responsibility. It was explained that the purpose of the focus groups was to enhance the researcher's understanding of the ways in which adolescents understand personal responsibility and how it impacts on their lives. The adolescents were encouraged to enter into a conversational dialogue and to ask any clarifying questions if necessary.

Before beginning the questions, the researcher ensured that each student was aware

that they were participating voluntarily and that they were free to leave the focus

group at any time without comment or penalty. In order to confirm student

consent, each student was asked to state their first name, that they were

participating voluntarily, and that they were aware that they were free to leave at

any point, into the tape recorder that recorded the entire focus group session. In

order to ensure confidentiality, only first names were used and audiotapes were

kept in a locked cupboard that was accessible to the researcher only. Refreshments

were made available to all students and the researcher began working through

questions created specifically for the student focus groups. Each focus group

continued for between 30 to 50 minutes. Once all questions were asked, students

were encouraged to discuss any other issues that had arisen for them or pursue any

queries they had. The researcher ensured that all participants were comfortable and

relaxed before they left the focus group session. Students were informed that they

were able to speak with the Guidance Officer if they felt they needed to due to

anything that had occurred during the focus group session. The students were

thanked for their time and participation.

Teachers

Participants. Ten secondary school teachers from the same two public high

schools in the south-eastern part of Queensland, Australia participated in the study.

The genders were not equally represented, with twice as many female participants

than male (F = 7, M = 3). Participants ranged in age from 23 to 56 years and level

of teaching experience from first year teachers to those with 30 years teaching

experience. All teachers taught at least two different year levels and all year levels were represented (Years 8 through 12).

Measures. The researcher developed a range of questions pertaining to personal responsibility based on previous reading and related research (see Appendix D). Examples of questions asked include, *"How do you teach/demonstrate personal responsibility in your classroom?"* and *"Do you think it is the responsibility of parents or teachers to teach personal responsibility to adolescents?"* The questions served to guide the conversational flow and encourage further communication from teachers.

Procedure. Ethical clearance was obtained as previously explained. Participants were recruited differently at both schools. At school 1, the researcher spoke at a staff meeting detailing the nature of her research and calling on volunteers to participate in a 45-minute focus group to determine how teachers understood personal responsibility. One teacher volunteered her time by writing her name on the list provided. Due to the lack of respondents, the year level coordinator asked a number of teachers in her staff room to participate. In this way five participants were recruited. At school 2, the Guidance Officer spoke to a number of teachers herself without the researcher's input and guaranteed participation from five teachers. Teachers were informed of the time and date for the focus group by either the year level coordinator or the Guidance Officer. Teachers were also advised that there would be refreshments made available during the focus groups to thank them for their participation.

The teachers were greeted by the researcher and moved into the appropriate room. A small amount of time was spent introducing the researcher to the teachers and ensuring the teachers knew each other. During this time, participants were provided with refreshments. The teachers were informed that they were going to be asked around ten questions examining personal responsibility. It was explained that the purpose of the focus groups was to enhance the researcher's understanding of the ways in which teachers understand personal responsibility and how it impacts on their lives and the lives of their students. The teachers were encouraged to enter into a conversational dialogue and ask any clarifying questions if necessary. Procedures similar to those undertaken with the students and previously discussed were followed to complete the focus groups with the teachers.

<div align="center">Analyses of Focus Group Data</div>

Research Question 1. How do adolescents and teachers understand "personal responsibility?"

The process of analysing the focus groups in this research program followed Krueger's (1998) method of focus group analysis. The first stage of analysis on the qualitative data was to type out the transcripts of each focus group. While doing so is a lengthy process, it affords the researcher a valuable opportunity to become immersed in the dialogue of the participants (Berg, 2004). Once transcribed, the researcher again listened to the recorded transcripts, ensuring that a correct and thorough transcription had occurred. All questions asked during the focus groups were written on big pieces of cardboard, and the answers given by the respondents

were recorded underneath. In doing so, answers that were repeated became apparent, allowing for the identification of trends and themes in the data (Charmaz, 2004; Krueger, 1998). Berg comments that the recording of focus group data should begin with a wide coverage of all themes, ideas, and opinions expressed throughout the interview. Casting the net wide in the first instance allows the researcher to capture the depth of the data and establish a thorough grounding for the final analysis. With this in mind, all questions asked, or comments made, by the participants were also recorded. In doing so, key words that participants emphasised (such as fault, blame, and punishment) became apparent as important components that had not been targeted directly by the focus group questions designed by the researcher.

After common themes were identified in the data, paragraphs were written using each theme as the focal point, and quotes from students and teachers were included. As an important aspect of the focus groups was to determine how the participants defined and understood personal responsibility, the use of their words was fundamental in serving this purpose (Fine et al., 2000). The initial analysis of the data was continually refined with common elements being grouped together to provide a more succinct reading (Morgan, 2004). The results of the focus group were structured around the main themes offered by the participants, using these themes as headings (Krueger & Casey, 2000). In doing so, it became very clear how the adolescents and teachers who participated in the focus groups understood and defined personal responsibility. In order to highlight potential gender differences, male and female responses were colour coded. As research in similar areas (such as studies examining self-esteem and emotional intelligence) often

highlights gender differences (Bolognini et al., 1996; Chubb et al., 1997; Ciarrochi et al., 2001; Devi & Rayulu, 2005; Harrod & Scheer, 2005), it was deemed essential to consider the potential impact of gender.

Major Themes from Student Focus Groups

For ease of understanding, Table 5.1 provides a summary of the main themes identified using the student focus group data. The following discussion explores these themes and integrates students' comments.

Table 5.1

Main Themes Identified using the Student Focus Group Data

Main Themes
Taking Personal Responsibility is Internal. Participants felt that personal responsibility must come from within the actor in a given situation, based on their own beliefs and understandings. They highlighted that personal responsibility cannot be attributed to you from an external source.
Cognitive Awareness Personal responsibility appears dependent on our ability to identify and manipulate our thoughts, feelings, and behavioural responses. Some participants were very clear about being able to choose their responses, while others felt that sometimes the choice was out of their hands.
Consideration of Consequences Most participants talked about the importance of consequences in relation to P.R. Some participants felt that it was important to take P.R. to avoid negative consequences. Others talked about a lack of consequences in their life regardless of their behaviour.
Social Responsibility Students talked about the impact taking personal responsibility has on their maturity and personal sense of being a good person. Many participants stated that considering one's impact on other people and demonstrating your maturity in this way was a sign of developing personal responsibility.

Taking Personal Responsibility is Internal

Adolescents were asked a range of questions to determine how they understood personal responsibility. Most adolescents highlighted that personal responsibility was about making one's own choices regarding one's behaviour. They felt that the authority for responsibility was one's own and while one could be blamed for certain things, only the individual could truly determine what they were responsible for. When asked how they would define, explain, or how they understand personal responsibility, adolescents responded with comments such as:

What goes through your mind when you are choosing to look after yourself.

Making the right decisions for yourself.

The guidelines you set yourself.

Knowing that whatever you do is your own choice.

Personal responsibility is something you are definitely responsible for, it's your own thing.

Adolescents were asked to consider the terms personal responsibility and accountability and determine whether they felt these terms represented similar or different ideas. While most adolescents found the terms difficult to define, the majority were clear about there being a difference between them. Most felt that

personal responsibility had an internal element, which meant that one decided upon one's own level of responsibility based on one's choices and behaviour. In contrast, they defined accountability as something that came from an external source and could be placed upon them as a result of other people's choices and behaviours. Adolescent's offered the following examples of this situation:

If you were found standing over a dead body. Even though you didn't kill the person, and are therefore not personally responsible for their death, you may be held accountable for it because you were there.

If you get in a car drunk and drive, you are personally responsible for that because you have made the decision to do it. But your friends can be held accountable because they knew you were drunk and did not stop you.

Personal responsibility is something you are definitely responsible for, it's your own thing, whereas accountability is when you might just be responsible for being there. People can just say you are accountable.

Accountability and responsibility are different. The person who does the act is responsible and those who failed to try and prevent the act can be held accountable.

Accountability is not as strong as responsibility.

Some adolescents were confused however about where the authority for personal responsibility resided. One student for example discussed how he had failed to take responsibility by walking the streets at night with a mate when he knew his parents would disapprove and believed that he was safe inside the friend's house. He mentioned getting into a scuffle with a passer-by and telling this to his parents who reiterated that he was not to walk the streets at night. When asked if he took personal responsibility in this situation, the adolescent answered that he had. When asked to elaborate on that he replied:

Oh well yeah um…I didn't get punished so there's not really anything…

This adolescent appears to feel that being responsible must come in the form of punishment given by parents that the adolescent succumbs to. The researcher asked the adolescent, "but what about within yourself?" to which he replied:

Yeah definitely, I went to this mate's place another time and [the guy] said 'do you want to go for a walk?' and I'm like, 'no, I'm not going.' I stayed because my parents wouldn't have wanted me to go.

From this statement it appears that the adolescent has internalised that his responsibility is to do what he has told his parents he will do. In this way he is taking personal responsibility for his actions, but appears unable to label it as such due to a lack of external consequences.

Cognitive Awareness

As personal responsibility requires the engagement of thought processes and decision making capabilities, a certain level of cognitive awareness is necessary. The researcher wanted to examine the level of cognitive awareness these adolescents demonstrated in relation to their thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and potential consequences. Would Year 11 students be aware that they were making choices when they experienced emotions and enacted behaviours? Further, would they feel that they were able to control these cognitive processes? Finally, would they cognitively process the potential consequences when deciding on particular behaviours?

Thoughts and feelings. Interestingly the adolescents were fairly evenly divided between those who felt they were able, were sometimes able, and were unable to make concrete choices and control their emotional experiences. Comments made by the adolescents ranged from:

I think we can [control our emotions], you can change your thinking.

A friend wouldn't come home when he was supposed to, and I was getting angry, but I was able to control my anger so that I could get him to come home.

Maybe [we can control our emotions], though not all the time.

The type of emotion makes a difference. I can control anger but not sadness.

I am probably unable to control my anger.

[Emotions are] harder to control than behaviour.

It is hard [to control your emotions] when someone is having a go at you, making you angry.

No [we can't control our emotions]. If it's so big of a thing, you have no choice sometimes.

[Emotions] come out whenever they feel like it.

A number of adolescents made reference to the fact that they were unable to control their emotional responses because people had *"made them feel"* certain things. The researcher asked one group of five participants if they felt that other people had the power to make them feel certain things. All five adolescents responded strongly that people could definitely make them feel a range of emotions. They stated it would be impossible to not feel anything at all. The researcher then asked the adolescents that if someone else has made them feel angry, who is responsible for the fact that they are angry and how they respond to that anger? Interestingly, the adolescents responded that the person feeling the anger (themselves) would be

responsible for the feeling and how they dealt with the feeling. One adolescent responded:

> It's not [my friends] responsibility if I'm [really annoyed]. It's not her responsibility to keep me calm, it's my responsibility. But whether I can or not is different.

The response of adolescents in this area was somewhat inconsistent. Most adolescents appeared to believe that they either could not, or could only somewhat, control their emotions, and used language that gave their power away to others in relation to their emotional states (such as *made me feel*). However after using such language, some would then argue that how they felt was their own responsibility. Perhaps they drew a distinction between how the original feeling came about (she made me angry) and how they dealt with the feeling (but I am choosing to let that anger go). Research has highlighted that the emotional experiences of adolescents are often intense, extreme and variable (Byrnes, 2003; Rosenblum & Lewis, 2003; Steinberg, 2004). This emotional inconsistency may make it difficulty or adolescents to feel in control of their emotions.

An interesting gender difference was revealed when discussing the adolescents' ability to control their emotions. The majority of girls felt that they could control anger but not sadness, whereas the majority of boys felt that they could control sadness but not anger. Does this gender difference reflect the fact that our emotional control is culturally contained? If boys feel that they can control their experience of sadness and girls feel that they can control their experience of anger,

is it not possible that both genders are capable of controlling both emotions, but are allowed a social loophole that does not require them to? Perhaps the fact that society tolerates anger in boys and sadness in girls, and these emotions are more often displayed publicly by the appropriate gender, leads adolescents to feel that these particular emotional experiences are beyond their control.

Behavioural choices and control. When looking at the data regarding behavioural choices, around two thirds of the adolescents felt that they were able to choose and therefore control their behavioural responses. These adolescents were aware that they made choices when deciding on what behaviours to enact and acknowledged that the way they behaved was a result of the standards they had set for themselves. Examples of this are:

It's your responsibility how you behave. We're not three-year-olds, we have to use our adult judgement.

It's your choice how you behave, there's always another option.

You set guidelines for yourself [which help determine the way you behave].

A small number of students however did not feel that they could control their behaviour. These students highlighted that they lashed out as a result of their emotions getting the better of them. One adolescent commented:

I would like to say that I can control my behaviour but I lash out when I'm all stirred up.

This adolescent then went on to say:

There was this boy and I choked him. I don't know what made me do it, I just lost my temper with him.

This response highlights a lack of awareness as to what the adolescent was thinking and feeling before the attack. Research has highlighted that the intensity of adolescents emotions can create difficulties when they attempt to make decisions and control their behaviour (Arnett, 1992, 1999; Larson & Richards, 1994). While the adolescent does not place the responsibility for his actions externally (by blaming someone else), he appears to negate his personal responsibility by stating that he did it because he lost his temper and lashed out. In this way he is alluding that the emotion and the behaviour are not under his control, and therefore he should not be held responsible for the outcome. Students who felt that they could not control their behaviour often cited external influences as the reason for this. The most common responses from these students were that peer pressure and alcohol consumption meant that they were unable to exert behavioural control. Comments from these students included:

Sometimes people may talk you into [bad behaviour] and you'll do it.

> *You can't control your behaviour when you are drunk and I usually get*
>
> *drunk after something really bad happens.*

This last comment was made by a student who stated that he often got drunk to cope with his fathers violence and commented that his behaviour while intoxicated included hitting people. This adolescent did not realise that his decision to get drunk was a choice, and that by choosing to get drunk he was responsible for any behaviour that followed. Another participant in the focus group strongly contested the idea that we are not responsible for our choices when we are intoxicated. This adolescent stated:

> *You are responsible…you can choose what you do when you're drunk.*

The response from this adolescent highlights an awareness of choices that the initial adolescent does not appear to possess. No adolescent however highlighted that the initial decision to get drunk was indeed a choice.

As expected, those adolescents who feel they are in control of their emotions and behaviours were more willing to take personal responsibility for these things than those who were not. Therefore, an ability to understand their cognitions, emotions, and choices is imperative to the willingness of adolescents to take personal responsibility for their lives. Until adolescents understand and accept that they are making deliberate choices about their feelings and reactions, they will be less likely to take personal responsibility for their decisions and the outcomes.

Consideration of consequences. The majority of adolescents highlighted that potential consequences largely moderate their behaviour. When asked if they consider the consequences when making a decision about what to do in situations, the majority of adolescents replied with always or often. One student noted:

When I get angry with teachers I hold my anger back by thinking of the consequences. If I punched the teacher I would get expelled.

It appears that consideration for the possible consequences of their behaviour is a fundamental way in which adolescents monitor their behaviour. Adolescents spoke about making the decision to start their assignments earlier after considering the stress, tiredness, and possible drop in academic performance that may occur if they left it until the last minute. This example highlighted that they were concerned about the possible consequences upon themselves and therefore took the personal responsibility to begin their assignments earlier. It appears essential then that adolescents are made aware of the possible consequences of their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours as they make their way through their lives.

Parental consequences were a major player in the considerations adolescents made when making decisions. Adolescents appear willing to accept the consequences for their actions when they have caused their parents anguish. The initial scenario, which presented an adolescent being grounded by angry parents because they had broken curfew, was regarded as a fair consequence by most adolescents. They argued that they had been aware of the rules and had chosen not to obey them, and

this meant that they should be willing to accept the punishment offered (being grounded for a month). The adolescents stated:

[Having our parents angry at us and being grounded] would be a fair enough reaction because we know we are in the wrong and that we didn't follow the rules.

Our parents' reaction is fair because we have broken the rules and should expect punishment.

Our parents' reaction is normal and fair because they are worried about us.

However adolescents did talk about the fact that they will make decisions that their parents would not approve of (such as getting drunk at parties). They stated that they consider the consequences available to them for particular outcomes and choose the behaviour that will reap the least painful consequence. For example, the students commented that the punishment would be greater if they came home from a party intoxicated as opposed to coming home half an hour past curfew. Armed with this knowledge, the adolescents stated they would get drunk at the party and decide to come home late when they were sober. Thus the thought process was focused on the parental consequences and how to minimise these instead of analysing their behaviour and being personally responsible.

An interesting fact that came through in the focus groups was that some adolescents who were prepared to accept the parental consequences in the initial scenario, highlighting that they had been aware of the rules and decided to break them, were making choices that their parents would not agree with because they were unlikely to get caught doing so. For example, one boy spoke about the fact that he does not come to school before 10.30am as he has the house to himself in the mornings and can therefore skip school without parental detection. This appears to show that he has not internalised personal responsibility for his own learning and is motivated through the possible consequences (or lack thereof) from his parents. It may be that the consequences determined by parents serve to undermine the development of personal responsibility in some adolescents as it inhibits the teenager from coming to their own understanding of why taking personal responsibility will enhance their own development. Perhaps taking personal responsibility becomes a way to placate mum and dad and avoid punishment as opposed to a genuine desire to enhance one's own life.

Indeed many adolescents discussed the need to take personal responsibility in order to avoid punishment and negative social consequences, as the following quotes highlight.

> *[It is important to take personal responsibility] because if not there'll be consequences that you may not like, so to avoid this you have to follow the rules.*

> *[It is important to take personal responsibility] because if you don't you'll*
>
> *get punished.*

These understandings of personal responsibility align with Kohlberg's preconventional level of moral development, particularly Stage 1, the punishment and obedience orientation. These adolescents feel that doing what is 'right', in this case taking personal responsibility, is necessary in order to avoid punishment and negative consequences. There also appears to be some movement toward Kohlberg's conventional level, as the adolescents comment on following 'the rules'. Here we see the desire of these adolescents to conform to the expectations of their families and their society. In these moral development stages, the role of consequences is important.

If an adolescent's desire to take personal responsibility comes predominantly from their fear of external punishment and negative consequences, it stands to reason that a lack of these factors would result in a decreased motivation to be personally responsible. Cauffman and Steinberg (2000) demonstrated that adolescents and adults were most likely to endorse antisocial behaviour in hypothetical situations when they were told there would be no negative consequences. While the notion of personal responsibility needs to be internalised, it may be that initial external consequences indicate why taking personal responsibility is important. Faced with consistent external consequences for undesirable behaviour, adolescents may come to see the connection between their choices and the consequences and adjust their internal understandings accordingly.

How Adolescents Learn about Personal Responsibility

Adolescents were asked where and from whom they felt they had learnt about personal responsibility. Parents, friends, school, and teachers were offered as the most consistent answers.

    Parents. The majority of adolescents felt that the bulk of their learning regarding personal responsibility came from their parents. They highlighted that they learnt personal responsibility from their parents by direct instruction *("Your parents do teach you a little bit, like they tell you, 'oh that's your responsibility'")*, discussion *("My mum has taught me many things and when I hear about what happened in her life it makes me not want to do those things")*, and consequences for unacceptable behaviour *("I lied to my mum about where I had stayed and when she found out I got grounded for a week")*. A few students highlighted that they have learned to be personally responsible by witnessing the mistakes their parents made *("My dad used to beat up my mum, and I don't want to turn out like that, and I've learnt things from my step dad about what's right and wrong")*.

One student clearly showed the impact her father had on her willingness to take personal responsibility when discussing a time she had not taken personal responsibility in her life. She commented:

I got suspended [from a private school] for smoking and the deputy tried to blame the other kids and my dad jumped in and said, 'She is 100% responsible for her own actions and she knows that. It's not their fault.'

She went on to say that her father was right, and that if she had taken responsibility for her behaviour and not smoked at school she would have not have been suspended. She stated that her behaviour had resulted in her expulsion from that school when she was in Year 8 and how she was now aware that those choices meant she was now in a public school (which in her eyes was less prestigious). She added:

If I was more responsible I don't think I'd be here…I would still be in [a private school], but I had to come here.

It appears that the direct instruction from this student's father as to her personal responsibility enabled her to take responsibility for her behaviour. She appears aware that she made choices of her own accord and is therefore responsible for the outcome of these choices.

In contrast, another student spoke about being caught with cigarettes more than once in his possession and his mother's inaction regarding consequences. He commented:

I got caught with them once in my bag, and once when I was selling them to

another mate…and then my mum went through my bag and found them

again. She goes, 'Have you been smoking?' [I reply] ' No!'

The researcher asked this student if there were consequences for his behaviour. If

his mother did not like him smoking, and she found that he was smoking, what did

she do to reinforce her rules? The adolescent stated that she threatened to take his

money away from him. When asked if this actually happened, and if he accepted

this consequence he stated:

I could [accept the consequence], but I can't let her take my money away.

My [mobile] phone is everything and that's where my money goes.

While the adolescent was able to acknowledge that he was not demonstrating

personal responsibility through his behaviour, he was not prepared to own the

consequences that came with this. As his mother did not reinforce her discipline, it

appears that this young man is learning that while our behaviours may have

consequences attached to them, we can simply override them if we choose to. It is

expected that this understanding would seriously undermine the willingness of an

adolescent to take personal responsibility.

Friends. While most adolescents did mention the influence of their friends

as a way in which they learned about personal responsibility, they did not offer

much detail about how this occurred. When encouraged to elaborate, most

adolescents had a difficult time coming up with explanations. It was only female

participants (and only those in the all female focus group), who discussed the way in which they had learned about personal responsibility from their friends. These young women drew attention to the fact that they learnt about personal responsibility through social interaction where they had let a friend down or been let down by a friend, as the following quotes demonstrate:

I put my friend in that position where I left her house and went off for a walk and she was worried, frightened and crying when I got back. That was the position I had put her in and I learnt not to do that to my friends.

I've actually been in that situation before [where a friend will not come home from a party on time] and I actually, I went up to her and I said, 'Look, I'm leaving now. You can either come with me or you don't. You know you're supposed to come home with me so you can either stay and get in trouble by your parents and mine or you can come home now.' And she came home.

This sense of understanding what it feels like when you act irresponsibly and hurt others, or when people act irresponsibly and hurt you, led to an internalisation of behaving responsibly in order to avoid causing pain to others. Interestingly only female participants highlighted the reinforcement of personal responsibility in this way. As females are socialised to place great emphasis on the impact of their behaviour on others, it makes sense that the young women in this study would highlight the impact of their behaviour on others as a major consideration in their choices about how to behave. This finding coincides with the argument offered by

Gilligan (1977) that women focus heavily on the notion of care when making moral decisions.

School/teachers. The majority of adolescents did not initially highlight school as somewhere they learn about personal responsibility. The exception to this however was in the all female focus group where they offered school, and the particular class that the school sets aside for personal development, as their first answer to the question, *"Where/from who do you learn about personal responsibility?"* As the researcher was specifically interested in whether adolescents do learn about personal responsibility at school, all adolescents were asked if the school they attended had specific classes aimed at teaching them personal responsibility. Most adolescents appeared unsure if this was the case, and it was only when either prompted by the researcher, or by one of their group members, that they acknowledged that their school did indeed do this. Roughly one third of all students agreed that they did learn about personal responsibility in these classes, and offered the following examples:

We did stuff on self-esteem and goal setting. That's personal responsibility I think, cause if you are going to have goals then it's your responsibility to get the goals.

We had to write notes and hand it in and it made me think.

Sometimes you want to know what they are talking about [on the videos], explaining possible consequences.

A small number of students however seemed highly scornful of these classes. They appeared to find the videos and exercises insulting to their intelligence and felt that the videos told them what to do instead of offering them information. Students commented:

We don't listen because it's boring.

You are going to do what you want to do anyway, it's your own choice.

[The videos] just say drugs are bad so we don't listen.

These adolescents commented that they were not supposed to listen to teachers when they discuss issues such as drug use, sexual practices and smoking. One adolescent commented:

You're just built up to think that teachers are bad and all that and you're not supposed to listen to them. So you just naturally block out everything that they say.

While a small number of adolescents did appear disinterested in learning about personal development at school in the way it was currently taught, most adolescents did acknowledge that they often learn about personal responsibility through the expectations of their teachers. The predominant example given was that of assignments, highlighting that they were being taught to be responsible for

their own choices and behaviours through the expectation that they would have their assignments done on time. The majority of adolescents felt that the school environment, through its structure and expectations, did indirectly teach adolescents about personal responsibility.

Adolescent Desires and Goals

Adolescents were asked if they felt that it was important to take personal responsibility in their lives and if so, why? The majority of students felt that it was very important to take personal responsibility, and argued that in doing so they would receive greater freedom, less punishment, increased maturity, and live better lives. Adolescent comments included:

> *We've got to show our parents we are responsible so we can have more freedom.*

> *I get in less trouble if I go home and tell my parents I've made a mistake and I'm not going to do it again.*

> *[Taking personal responsibility] helps you mature.*

> *[Taking personal responsibility] helps you become a better person.*

> *Those who don't take personal responsibility don't come out on top.*

Interestingly, these comments reflect what is happening developmentally for adolescents. Adolescence is a time when young people are striving for increased freedom from parental control and punishment. A study by Harvey and Retter (2002) examined the desire for freedom for children and adolescents aged 8 through 16. The results revealed that adolescents self-reported a greater desire for freedom that younger children. Adolescents appear to appreciate that demonstrating personal responsibility will allow others to see that they are maturing and capable of greater freedom. Further, it will assist them in reaching their personal goals and leading successful lives. As one adolescent commented:

> *We as teenagers expect so much freedom, and we've got to give a little back, to be able to get it. So we've got to show them that we are responsible, so we can get what we want. Not what we want but we can have, have freedom and everything else that goes with it. You've gotta give and take a little.*

The student focus groups provided a wealth of information on the way in which personal responsibility is understood, enacted and avoided in the lives of adolescents. Adolescents clearly indicated the significant role that personal responsibility has in their development, particularly as they move toward increasing independence. The views offered by the adolescents were thoughtful and sophisticated. The focus group conversations identified the key themes of choices and consequences, emotional understanding and behavioural control. Not only is the construct of personal responsibility relevant in the lives of adolescents,

it appears to be a developmental milestone that adolescents feel they need to accomplish to lead happy and successful lives.

Major Themes from Teacher Focus Groups

For ease of understanding, Table 5.2 provides a summary of the main themes identified using the teacher focus group data. The following discussion explores these themes and integrates teachers' comments.

Table 5.2

Main Themes Identified using the Teacher Focus Group Data

Main Themes
Taking Personal Responsibility is Internal. Participants felt that personal responsibility must come from within the actor in a given situation, based on their own beliefs and understandings. They highlighted that personal responsibility is embraced as it allows one to improve one's life.
Cognitive Awareness Personal responsibility appears dependent on our ability to identify and manipulate our thoughts, feelings, and behavioural responses. Most teachers felt that adolescents were not aware of their ability to make conscious choices.
Consideration of Consequences Most participants talked about the importance of consequences in relation to personal responsibility. Teachers felt that many adolescents did not consider the consequences before acting. Teachers also argued that while enforcing consequences was very important, they were often hampered in doing so due to their desire to get on with teaching.
Social Responsibility Teachers talked about the necessity of developing personal responsibility in order to demonstrate maturity. Many participants stated that considering one's impact on other people and demonstrating your maturity in this way was a sign of developing personal responsibility.
Self-management/Self-control The teachers focused on the need for students to master self-management and self-control in order to achieve personal responsibility. Teachers also felt that students needed to have some interest in their lives to seek to develop their personal responsibility.

Taking Personal Responsibility is Internal

The teachers were asked to consider what personal responsibility means to them. The majority of teachers felt that personal responsibility was an internal authority, awareness and drive. Teachers highlighted that when considering personal responsibility, the impetus for desirable action comes from within the individual for the benefit of the individual. They argued that someone who is personally responsible enacts behaviours that improve their own life without external prompting. The following comments highlight this point:

> *[Personal responsibility is] taking some initiative to show personal responsibility, not waiting to be told.*

> *[Personal responsibility is] saying to themselves, 'Look, I'm missing out if I'm late, so for myself I need to be here on time.'*

> *[Personal responsibility] is internal. You can do all you can [to help adolescents] but they need to take it on board to become personally responsible.*

> *You can put all these things into place, the consequences etcetera, but you're still not making them accept personal responsibility in the end are you because you know, very few of them take it on board. That's the part that sort of upsets me the most, is so few of them take on all these things*

that you try to do with them on board. They tend to [go], 'Oh yeah, there

she goes again,' and you can see them switch off.

This sense of adolescents needing to "take on board" that which has been taught to them highlights the need for adolescents to internalise the values aligned with personal responsibility. Internalisation involves the transmission of values, morals, and beliefs from an external agent (such as a parent or teacher) to the target person (in this case an adolescent) (Eisenberg, Miller, Shell, McNalley, & Shea, 1991). Teachers point out that unless adolescents internalise a sense of personal responsibility, their motivation to demonstrate personally responsible behaviour may be to avoid punishment more so than to enhance their lives. As one teacher commented:

Sometimes they are exhibiting behaviour that might look like it's

responsible, that's responsible behaviour, sometimes it's just, they don't

necessarily value responsibility, it's that they value not being punished. So

they're avoiding the consequences of them not being responsible as

opposed to them being responsible because they value that sort of activity

or behaviour.

If we are asking adolescents to internalise personal responsibility, we are encouraging them to see the benefits in a system of behaviour that requires personal control and autonomy. If the authority for personal responsibility is internal, would the acceptance of this concept by hampered by the fact that

adolescents typically inhabit worlds where their authority is undermined by the higher authority of others?   As one teacher highlighted:

> *Personal responsibility I think by definition, the authority is internal, it's yourself…but if you are in an institution like school…you are living by these rules and you get in trouble when you've done something wrong.*

If adolescents are keen to avoid punishment, they may determine that the best way to do so in an environment where their internal authority is undermined may be to avoid taking any responsibility at all. Indeed, teachers highlighted that those adolescents who did not demonstrate personal responsibility continually blamed others for their behaviour and outcomes. These adolescents refused to internalise personally responsible behaviour through their reluctance to accept ownership of their choices, behaviours and outcomes.   Teachers commented on the deflection of responsibility demonstrated by these adolescents.

> *[We teachers] have had discussions before about things like [society seems to say] that I am not responsible for my behaviour but everyone else is responsible for my behaviour. And it's very much the same with students as well, in that they don't have to be responsible for themselves as young adults, but we are constantly responsible for everything they do.*

> *Or the I've got a reason why I'm doing this. I'm acting up because my mum doesn't love me enough. Or I'm acting up because I come from a deprived home. Or I'm acting up because I didn't get my Weeties this morning. You*

know, that whole idea of, well I've got a reason why I'm like this and I'm in a bad mood so, you know, I'm allowed to be in a bad mood.

There's always excuses. There's always a different excuse every day of the week. Why they don't have a calculator, why they didn't bring their textbook, why they didn't bring their book, why they don't have a pen. It's one thing after another.

I think Year 11s should be more aware of their accountability for their own results. Students don't hand in their work on the due date and then they'll try to run around you and then continue to not be accountable. And then they'll turn it back on you and say, 'Well why did I get an NC [not complete]?' They think that you're accountable for their actions. They put the blame on the teacher.

I had an assignment due in on Monday and there's probably half a dozen that didn't hand it in then and just the excuses. It wasn't their fault, their disk wasn't working or something happened at home. It was all these things that happened on the weekend and it wasn't their fault that they couldn't get their assignment done. They're just trying to place blame somewhere else rather than being responsible for their own actions.

I spoke to a student this morning about uniform and the excuse this morning was that the dog decided to go to the toilet on it, and it's soaking. So, it's not her fault that she's not wearing her uniform today, but it is her fault

because she should have made sure that the uniform was not available for the animal to [get at].

Even in Year 11 and 12 [adolescents say] 'Mum didn't do this for me.' And I think to myself, 'I hate to tell you this kid, but if you were mine you'd have gone hungry or naked or whatever because as far as I'm concerned by now that's something you should be doing for yourself.

In grades 11 and 12, they'll blame their mother, they'll blame their father, and I'll say…do it for yourself.

In contrast, teachers spoke about students who did demonstrate personal responsibility in their classes. They highlighted that these students took initiative for their own learning, arrived on time, had their equipment, and were respectful and enthusiastic about their learning. The following comments demonstrate:

They always have their books, they're on time, they're lining up outside saying, 'Are we doing something good today Miss?'

They dress presentably, showing respect for themselves. They speak gently, politely and appropriately to their peers and their teachers. They'll volunteer for different things, whether it be in a school sports team or musical.

They accept responsibility for their work. You know most kids, if their marks go down a bit and you say to them, okay I wonder why? And they'll say, they'll know, they'll know it's because they haven't been doing their homework.

It goes back to …thinking for yourself. [A student] gave me the wrong criteria sheet for the assignment this morning, so he runs back up to me and gave me the right one. But I mean he thought about that, that was something, he went away, he looked and thought, 'Oh, I've given her the wrong criteria sheet', he came back and gave me the right one.

[They show personal responsibility through] things like, 'Miss, I was away on Friday. I hear you gave out an assignment?' 'Miss, I was away, what was the homework?' Compared to the 'What did you do setting that question? You never covered that!' [And I say], 'You might find you were away.' [They respond with] 'Well you didn't tell me I had to know that.'

It appears that a major component of personal responsibility is a *willingness* to hold oneself accountable for the choices one makes, positive and negative. For adolescents to be willing to take personal responsibility, they must see the advantage in doing so. The focus of taking responsibility needs to be shifted away from blame and toward the sense of personal power that comes from owning one's choices and thus being able to make productive choices. It may be that adolescents feel powerless to direct their lives and control their choices due to desiring freedom and independence while still being within the clutches of parents and teachers.

Lack of Adolescent Awareness

Teachers were asked to reflect on the cognitive capabilities of adolescents and determine whether they felt that adolescents made thoughtful, considered decisions about their actions. Most teachers felt that while adolescents were capable of the necessary cognitive and self-control needed to rationally think through the choices available to them and the possible consequences, many adolescents did not follow this process. Teachers commented:

> *I don't think adolescents are aware that they are making a choice. It's automatic, as opposed to something that's thought out in a cognitive process. 'Well if I get out of bed now I'll get to school on time, but if I sleep in for half an hour that'd be lovely and I'll be late but that's fine.' I don't think they go through that rational [process]. It's just, 'I want to sleep.'*

> *No [they are not aware they are making a choice]. They're just blurting stuff out and doing it.*

> *I don't think they consider the consequences their actions will have or how the person that they're affecting will feel about it. I just find that kids who lack personal responsibility can be disrespectful in the way they talk to you. And kids who have responsibility, if they ever talk to you [negatively], like I said that boy before, he made sure that he came and apologised, he made sure that I was feeling okay about it.*

Interestingly, this discussion led on to the place of consequences in reinforcing adolescents to think about their choices and behaviours. Some teachers felt that adolescents were able to remain ignorant about their choices and the outcomes from these as the consequences were minimal or non-existent.

> *[At university] they have to take personal responsibility to have [their assignments] in on time. Whereas because we can't have the same level of consequence, there's not that level of responsibility.*

> *I think they don't think [things] through because they don't have to, there are no consequences.*

A number of teachers highlighted that fact that the nature of their job prevented them from enforcing consequences when adolescents failed to demonstrate personal responsibility. Time restraints and the need to get on with teaching the curriculum were cited as main reasons why teachers were often unable to enforce consequences. As the following teachers commented:

> *You get into a lot of tangles. I mean we get in situations in the art room at times where you'll have half the class without a pencil to draw with. So if I then provide them with a pencil they haven't had to be responsible for themselves because I've catered for that. And you see a lot of teachers do it all the time. In order for us to do our jobs, we make up for the students lack of personal responsibility and organization. We do it all the time.*

There are kids that are always late and I don't give them any consequences.

I just don't have time to follow it up. Is that your priority, them being on

time? Or is your priority getting through the lesson?

This introduces an interesting element to any program that would aim to teach personal responsibility to adolescents in schools. The success of such a program may be undermined by the fact that teachers are unable to consistently reinforce the message on a day-to-day basis. Adolescents may feel that they are being told that their behaviour comes with consequences, only to have the opposite reinforced in their everyday school experience. If adolescents feel that the appearance of consequences moderates their behaviour, a resounding lack of them will most certainly undermine potential progress in the area of personal responsibility.

Consideration of Others

A large number of teachers felt that the desire to be personally responsible was affected by consideration of how our actions would affect other people. Teachers commented that it was imperative that we considered the outcome for others when making decisions about our behaviour. They argued that a personally responsible person has a high level of social awareness. Teachers made the following comments:

[Personal responsibility is about] servitude. You sacrifice a little bit of

yourself for the sake of others.

[Personal responsibility has] repercussions for others and these can be

positive if you take personal responsibility - others can benefit.

If you are personally responsible you demonstrate respect, awareness and

concern for the well-being of others.

While personal responsibility focuses on an internal authority that monitors one's

own behaviour, it contains an element that focuses on how one's behaviour will

impact on others. If one's behaviour is beneficial to oneself, yet impacting

negatively on others in society, one may argue that it is not personally responsible

behaviour. For example, if I opened a sewing factory where I paid my workers $2

an hour and made a healthy profit for myself in selling jumpers, it could be argued

that this is not personally responsible behaviour. While I may be benefiting from

the profits, I am not benefiting from undermining the dignity and value of my

workers. This is a social responsibility that bleeds into my personal responsibility.

One cannot demonstrate personal responsibility without upholding some

fundamental values about the worth of other people. Personal responsibility

therefore resides within a socially responsible context.

Related Constructs

Self-control. Teachers were asked to specifically consider the impact that

self-control may have on personal responsibility. All teachers felt that this

construct impacted heavily, with many highlighting that those adolescents who lack

personal responsibility also appear to lack self-control. In particular, it was argued that adolescents seek instant gratification at the cost of demonstrating personally responsible behaviour. Teachers commented:

They can't control the desire to seek what they want. They're taught, 'I want.' I should be at school on time but I want to sleep, so I sleep. I should do my assignment but I want to watch TV, I want to play a video game, I want…

I think lack of self-control goes hand in hand with not accepting personal responsibility. I mean you see it with the kids that we teach and you see it out in society too. Someone goes and kills somebody and next thing we're making some excuse for it. So you know, I think the two go together very much.

Self-management. A number of teachers raised the issue of self-management as an imperative that impacts on personal responsibility. These teachers felt that many adolescents used excuses about why they were unable to do the right thing that reflected a deeper inability (or unwillingness) to manage their needs. It was stated that students who often turned up to class without textbooks or the appropriate materials highlighted that they were between their parents' homes and therefore unable to have the correct material. While teachers highlighted that split custody is a significant issue which genuinely impacts on the ability of adolescents to be as organised as they may need to be, they also noted that some students were able to manage this arrangement successfully while others were not.

The main difference, they felt, was in the student's ability to self-manage. One teacher commented:

> *That's another thing with responsibility there, whether they have the skills to manage themselves because…to be responsible for homework and uniform they need to have some sort of management skills.*

Initiative, motivation, interest, enthusiasm and willingness. The teachers created a list of constructs that they felt were a part of personal responsibility. They highlighted initiative, motivation, interest, enthusiasm and willingness. Many teachers felt that adolescents who lacked a sense of personal responsibility lacked any real interest in, and enthusiasm about, their lives. Consequently their motivation and initiative was decreased along with their willingness to stretch themselves. Discussion with the teachers revealed this to be a major concern for most teachers who felt that these students were not within their reach. Teacher comments included:

> *[Adolescents] have got to show some initiative about taking some responsibility. I think a lot of students in particular tend to sit back and wait to be told what to do.*

> *I've seen a lot of pot plant students, you know, where the pot plant needs to be watered and fed and put in the sunshine and if it doesn't it will wither all by itself. The sort of 'Here I am, I'm here but now you have to look after me.'*

[I sometimes think] that if breathing wasn't an automatic reaction most of

[my students] would be dead because they have nothing, they have no

energy, they have no life in them, they don't even misbehave, they haven't

even got the energy to do that.

You cannot get them to do anything.

I see so many [students], and talk to so many of them they are just

drifting… they're just drifting in their whole life. They're just…marking

time. And I think that that's even part of personal responsibility…they

should have something that they are interested in. Some of these kids have

got nothing that they're interested in at all.

You've got to be enthusiastic about getting up, and that's really what I want

for the ones who don't take responsibility, is to be enthusiastic about

something.

Even if enthusiastic is too strong a word. Even the willingness to do

something.

The above quotes reflect the frustration teachers feel when trying to help students

who appear unreachable. As teachers highlighted the areas of motivation, interest,

enthusiasm, and willingness as essential components for reaching students (perhaps

the most essential part of teaching), it is essential that these elements are weighed

heavily when creating the Personal Responsibility Program (see Chapter 7). It will

be fundamental to incorporate activities that resonate with the students lived experiences. In doing so, students may feel more motivated, interested, enthusiastic, and willing to participate and learn. As the basic tenets of constructivism focus on meeting students where they are at, encouraging them to challenge their own beliefs and ideas, supporting them to enhance and direct their own learning, and making the learning relevant to their lives, the Personal Responsibility Program should engage students' interest, motivation and enthusiasm.

The Teaching of Personal Responsibility

Teachers were asked to consider who they felt should be responsible for teaching personal responsibility to adolescents. The majority of teachers felt that it was the primary responsibility of parents to teach this to their children, and that the role of the teacher was a reinforcing one. The comments from teachers included:

> *I think so much teaching comes down to what kids are taught in the first five years of life. And they've been taught by their parents. You know, it's so much, teachers can verbalise it but it's not going to penetrate unless they see it modelled by their parents and that's the sad fact of life.*

> *I don't think I've even heard someone tell a story about a teacher they've had at school and say, 'They taught me to be responsible.' They're always talking about, you know, 'I did well in my maths exam because they were a good teacher.' It's always a story about curriculum. So I really do think,*

almost positive, that most of the teaching does come from parents for that other stuff. I think you can, maybe you can model how your classroom works and what you expect in your classroom, but I don't think that kids are necessarily going to take that away and use it in everyday life.

Teachers appear to feel that parents abdicated their role as a teacher of values. One teacher however did comment that while parents may be fundamentally important in teaching personal responsibility to their children, there are parents who are unable to do so. This teacher argued that both parents and teachers should share the responsibility for teaching values such as personal responsibility to children. He commented:

In reality there are some parents who are incapable of teaching anything to their kids other than negative skills…and then it becomes a case of us [teachers] modelling [personal responsibility].

When asked to consider how teachers felt they demonstrated personal responsibility in their classrooms, most discussed the modelling of their behaviours. They mentioned that they often pointed out to the adolescents that they (the teachers) were being responsible by arriving at their classes on time and with all the necessary materials. The majority of teachers commented that they had not thought explicitly about teaching personal responsibility to their students, but that they actually did so on a daily basis. They noted that more direct methods of teaching personal responsibility included talking about personal responsibility and

highlighting the consequences for students if they did not fulfil their responsibilities. The following comments illustrate this:

I incorporate it a lot. I use the words like, 'It's your responsibility to have your books, it's your responsibility to have your tie on, etc.'

When they start blaming their parents I always say, 'Okay, you're not going to change your parents, what you've got to do is change yourself. And you've got to be responsible for yourself. If mum won't buy you the exercise book you've got to say, 'Okay, I'm going to do it for myself.'

A teacher at one school discussed classes that the school had run directly aimed at enhancing the adolescents' awareness of their rights, roles and responsibilities. Unfortunately, the teacher felt that these classes had not been a success. She commented:

We did a little bit in Year 11 about rights, roles and responsibility, to see what they perceived of it, but it didn't really go anywhere I don't think.

While this teacher felt that these classes had not produced the desired results, predominantly due to not connecting with the students, many teachers spoke about the fact that adolescents appear to have an enhanced understanding of their rights, but limited understanding of their responsibilities. It was argued that the students often used the excuse of their rights to avoid taking responsibility and

acknowledging their negative behaviour. The following comments highlight this point:

> *You know, I think there has been so much emphasis on, let's not punish what they do, let's not correct them whey they do something wrong…they seem to think it is their right to be constantly praised no matter how badly they behave.*

> *They don't accept responsibility for their actions. And they can't understand they're not demonstrating respect for their fellow peers by coming in and disrupting [the class]. They think they have the right to do that.*

> *They just see [everything] as their right. Here is my right. I have a right to my time.*

> *That's my catch cry. You've got rights but you've also got responsibilities.*

While teachers felt that parents were the most influential teachers for their children with regard to values-based education, they appeared open to teaching about personal responsibility in their classes. While they may not have deliberately sought to teach this skill to adolescents, they commented on a range of ways in which they did address this area. Indeed, most teachers felt that an increase in the personal responsibility of adolescents would make their job as teachers easier. It appears that teachers would be willing to teach a program aimed at teaching

personal responsibility to adolescents, as they are able to see the benefits they

would reap as teachers. One teacher remarked:

Oh look, the learning environment would be wonderful if those few

[adolescents] chose a different attitude. It just would make it, we'd get

through the work so much more quickly, we'd probably do more fun things,

and we'd probably have time at the end of class to even do their homework

or have a little natter with each other.

Now that I think of it, the idea of personal responsibility, if you can latch on

to that I think you will deal with a whole lot of other issues as well, like

respect for yourself and other people, and you know lots and lots of things

would be covered just by looking at personal responsibility.

The focus groups conducted with the teachers largely emphasised similar themes to

that espoused by the adolescents. Additionally the teachers were able to identify

overt ways in which those students who lack personal responsibility behave.

Undertaking focus groups with adolescents and teachers provided a wealth of

information as to how to understand and define personal responsibility.

Similarities between both participant groups allowed for a clear set of key themes

to emerge. These key themes included internal accountability, cognitive,

emotional, and behavioural awareness and control, choices and consequences, and

consideration of others. The findings from the focus group data largely

complemented the literature derived definition of personal responsibility presented

in Chapter 2, which was "the ability to identify and regulate one's own thoughts, feelings and behaviour, along with a willingness to hold oneself accountable for the choices made and social and personal outcomes generated." The four components of personal responsibility, being (1) an awareness of, and control over, one's own thoughts and feelings; (2) an awareness of, and control over, choices made regarding behaviour; (3) a willingness to hold oneself accountable for the behaviour enacted and the resulting outcome; and (4) an awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one's behaviour upon others, were also supported.

It is acknowledged that the literature used to shape the definition and components of the personal responsibility construct also guided the questions asked in the focus groups and therefore the data provided. However, the adolescents and teachers were given the freedom to talk widely on the topic and the aspects of personal responsibility identified in the focus groups aligned with the definition and components presented in Chapter 2. The similarity of the focus group findings to the definition and components of personal responsibility meant that the researcher could progress the work within the framework of the initial conceptualisation of the variable.

The focus group data also guided the creation of the Personal Responsibility Program as it provided key areas to target when creating situation-based activities (see Chapter 7). The key themes of "adolescent awareness of choices and consequences" and "one's impact on others" largely influenced the focus of the Personal Responsibility Program. Further, the examples of students who lack personal responsibility provided by teachers enabled the researcher to generate

activities that targeted these specific behaviours. Additionally, as highlighted in the following chapter, the focus group data informed the creation of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire.

CHAPTER 6: STUDY 2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSONAL

RESPONSIBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

The previous chapter demonstrated the key themes that adolescents and teachers articulated when discussing personal responsibility. These key themes were crucial in informing the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire. This chapter describes the creation and analysis of this measure, demonstrating how items were created and analyses undertaken. Study 2 addressed the following research question, *"Can a quantitative questionnaire define and measure an adolescent's level of personal responsibility?"*

Essential Steps in Developing the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire

The scale development process articulated below is based on Hinkin's (1998) first four steps in questionnaire creation. These four steps, being item generation, questionnaire administration, initial item reduction, and confirmatory factor analysis, are followed in order to provide evidence of the construct validity of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire – the extent to which the scale measures what it is professed to measure (Huck, 2004). Kerlinger (1986) argues that the link between theory and psychometric measurement is demonstrated via construct validity, and Schmitt and Klimoski (1991) highlight that construct validation must be demonstrated when developing quality measures. The four steps described below will provide evidence of the construct validity of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire.

Step 1 – Item Generation

The construction of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire has been developed

on the basis of information gathered from the literature on adolescent, cognitive,

and moral development (see Chapters 2 & 3), information obtained from student

and teacher focus groups (see Chapter 5), and quantitative measures of constructs

sharing similarities with personal responsibility (such as locus of control and

emotional intelligence). Before beginning the process of constructing a new

measure, Mertens (2005) commented that it is essential that previous literature be

examined to ensure that an appropriate and statistically sound measure does not

already exist. In consulting the literature, it was established that no quantitative

measure of personal responsibility was available. The literature did provide an

insight into similar research that has preceded the current study, and in doing so

offered avenues to venture down and avenues to avoid. Indeed a thorough

immersion in relevant research and literature can valuably inform the creation of a

new measure (Creswell, 2005). Similarly, the focus group data reported in Chapter

5 highlighted areas of importance to students and teachers when considering

personal responsibility. The areas given emphasis by the participants were targeted

as key areas from which to draw items. It is expected that doing so will assist the

measure in being highly relevant and applicable to the lives of adolescents.

A number of related measures were used to compile the Personal Responsibility

Questionnaire. As personal responsibility shares similarities with a range of

closely related constructs, it was felt that using items from these measures would

inform our understanding of personal responsibility (Mertens, 2005). Of these

items, some were copied faithfully from the original measure while others were

adapted to suit the current study appropriately. In total, 66 items were drawn from

the following measures: The Vocational Locus of Control Scale: Questionnaire

(Fournier & Jeanrie, 2003), The Internal versus External Control of Reinforcement

Scale (Rotter, 1966), The Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem,

1995), The Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998), The Proactive

Coping Scale (Greenglass, Schwarzer, & Taubert, 1999), The Self-Regulation

Scale (Schwarzer, Diehl, & Schmitz, 1999), The Social Responsibility Scale

(Nedwek, Flewelling, Paschall, & Ringwalt, 1998), The Control – Individual

Protective Factors Index (Phillips & Springer, 1992), The Restraint-Weinberger

Adjustment Inventory, (Feldman & Weinberger, 1994), and The Children's

Hopelessness Measure (Kazdin, Rodgers, & Colbus, 1986). The items were chosen

to reflect key issues that arose from the focus group analyses and the literature.

Table 6.1 lists the items taken from related measures and used in the Personal

Responsibility Questionnaire.

While 66 items were chosen from related measures, the remaining 34 items came

from the focus group data gathered in Study 1. Some items were almost direct

quotes from the adolescents who had participated in the focus groups. Item 2, for

example, reads *"I often lash out when I am all stirred up."* This comment was

made by one adolescent male to explain his inability to take personal responsibility

Table 6.1

Items taken from Related Measures and used in the Personal Responsibility

Questionnaire

Measure	Original item	Alterations made
The Vocational Locus of Control Scale: Questionnaire (Fournier & Jeanrie, 2003)	60. Making choices doesn't get you anywhere because others decide for you anyway.	1. Making choices doesn't get *me* anywhere because others decide for *me* anyway.
	42. Fate or luck couldn't possibly play an important role in decision making.	2. *Chance* or luck *does not usually* play an important role in *outcomes*.
	26. You alone are responsible for your future.	3. *I am mainly* responsible for *my* future.
	78. To succeed at school, all you have to do is work hard.	4. To succeed at school, *I believe you have to* work hard.
	68. If you try hard enough, there's always a way to reach your career goals.	5. *I believe* if you try hard enough, there's *usually* a way to reach *your goals*.
	8. Having a job is a matter of luck and not choice.	6. *Doing well in school* is a matter of luck and not choice.
	11. If teacher were more competent, you would learn more at school.	7. If teachers *put in more effort I would do better* at school.
		8. *I am mainly* responsible for *my* success in school.
	22. You alone are responsible for your success in school.	
The Internal versus External Control of Reinforcement Scale (Rotter, 1966)	23b. There is a direct connection between how hard I study and the grades I get.	9. There is *usually a* connection between how hard I study and the grades I get.
	25a. Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.	10. Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.
	13a. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.	11. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.
	2a. Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck.	12. Many of the unhappy things *that occur* in people's lives are partly due to bad luck.
	19a. One should always be willing to admit mistakes.	13. *I am usually* willing to admit *my* mistakes.
	14. It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.	14. It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.
	2b. People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.	15. People's misfortunes often result from the mistakes they make.
	19b. It is usually best to cover up one's mistakes.	16. *I believe* it is usually best to cover up *my* mistakes.
	15b. Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.	18. Many times *I* might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.
	23a. Sometimes I can't understand how teachers arrive at the grades they give.	19. Sometimes I can't understand how teachers arrive at the grades they give.
	11a. Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it.	20. Becoming a success is a matter of hard *work*.
	13b. It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow.	21. *I don't* plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad *luck* anyhow.
	28b. Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.	22. Sometimes I *feel I* don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.
	28a. What happens to me is my own doing.	23. What happens to me is *mainly* my own doing.
	15a. In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.	24. In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.
The Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995)	1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	25. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.
	3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	26. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.
	6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	27. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.
The Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998)	31. I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles.	28. I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles.
	3. I expect that I will do well on most things I try.	29. I expect that I will do well on most things I try.
	9. I am aware of my emotions as I experience them.	30. I am aware of my emotions as I experience them.
	21. I have control over my emotions.	31. I have control over my emotions.
	19. I know why my emotions change.	32. I know why my emotions change.
The Proactive Coping Scale (Greenglass et al., 1999)	13. When I experience a problem, I take the initiative in resolving it.	33. When I experience a problem, I *actively seek to resolve* it.
	3. After attaining a goal, I look for another, more challenging one.	After *reaching* a goal I look for another, more challenging one.
The Self-Regulation Scale (Schwarzer et al., 1999)	3. If an activity arouses my feelings too much, I can calm myself down so that I can continue with the activity soon.	34. If an activity *makes me feel stressed*, I can calm myself down so that I can continue with the *activity*.

	10. I stay focused on my goal and don't allow anything to distract me from my plan of action.	35. I *usually* stay focused on my goal and don't allow anything to distract me from my plan of action.
	9. I have a whole bunch of thoughts and feelings that interfere with my ability to wok in a focused way.	36. I have a whole bunch of thoughts and feelings that *often distract me from what I am trying to do.*
	5. It is difficult for me to suppress thoughts that interfere with what I need to do.	37. It is *often* difficult for me to *stop* thoughts that interfere with what I need to do.
The Social Responsibility Scale (Nedwek et al., 1998)	5. I really care about how my actions might affect others.	38. I really care about how my actions might affect others.
	6. I have a responsibility to make the world a better place.	39. I have a responsibility to make the world a better place.
	2. If I want to risk getting in trouble, that is my business and nobody else's.	40. If I want to risk getting in trouble, that is my business and nobody else's.
The Control – Individual Protective Factors Index (Phillips & Springer, 1992)	3. I don't owe the world anything.	41. I don't owe the world anything.
	7. I am responsible for what happens to me.	42. I am mainly responsible for what happens to me.
	2. It is important to think before you act.	43. It is important to think before you act.
	1. Other people decide what happens to me.	44. Other people decide what happens to me.
	3. If I study hard, I will get better grades.	45. If I study hard, I will get better grades.
	13. If I feel like it, I hit people.	46. If I feel like it, I hit people.
	11. When I am mad, I yell at people.	47. When I am mad, I yell at people.
	10. I do whatever I feel like doing.	48. I do whatever I feel like doing.
The Restraint-Weinberger Adjustment Inventory, (Feldman & Weinberger, 1994)	6. To make a good decision it is important to think.	49. To make a good decision it is important to think *it through first*.
	8. I do things without giving them enough thought.	50. I *often* do things without giving them enough thought.
	6. People who get me angry better watch out.	51. People who make me angry *had* better watch out.
	19. Before I do something, I think about how it will affect the people around me.	52. Before I do something, I think about how it will affect the people around me.
	26. I try very hard not to hurt other people's feelings.	53. I try very hard not to hurt other people's feelings.
	21. People can depend on me to do what I know I should.	54. People can depend on me to do *the right thing most of the time.*
	13. I do things that are really not fair to people I don't care about.	55. I *often* do things that are really not fair to people I don't care about.
	22. I lose my temper and "let people have it' when I'm angry.	56. *When I'm angry* I lose my temper and "let people have it."
	12. I become "wild and crazy" and do things other people might not like.	57. I *sometimes* become "wild and crazy" and do things other people *may not* like.
	25. I pick on people I don't like.	58. I *sometimes* pick on people I don't like.
	7. I think about other people's feelings before I do something they might not like.	59. I think about other people's feelings before I do something they might not like.
	27. I stop and think things through before I act.	60. I stop and think things through before I act.
	16. I make sure that doing what I want will not cause problems for other people.	61. I make sure that doing what I want will not cause problems for other people.
	14. I will cheat on something if I know no one will find out.	62. I *would* cheat on *an exam* if I knew no one *would* find out.
	19. Before I do something, I think about how it will affect the people around me.	63. *I* think about how *my behaviour* will *impact on other people*.
The Children's Hopelessness Measure (Kazdin et al., 1986)	24. I say the first thing that comes into my mind without thinking enough about it.	64. I *often* say the first thing that comes into my mind without *really* thinking about it.
	10. I don't think I will get what I really want.	65. I *sometimes think I won't* get what I really want.
	66. I might as well give up because I can't make things better for myself.	66. I might as well give up because I can't make things better for myself.

in some situations. Table 6.2 provides the main themes, participant quotes, and items developed using the focus group data. For a complete analysis of the focus group data, refer to Chapter 5.

Table 6.2

Main Themes, Participant Quotes and Items Developed using the Focus Group Data

Main Themes	Quotes	Items
Taking personal responsibility is internal. Participants felt that personal responsibility must come from within the actor in a given situation, based on their own beliefs and understandings. They highlighted that P.R. cannot be attributed to you from an external source.	"[P.R. is about] making the right decisions for yourself." "Knowing that whatever you do is your own choice." "[Personal responsibility] is internal. You can do all you can [to help adolescents] but they need to take it on board to become personally responsible."	1. I am responsible for the choices I make. 2. When making decisions, I decide for myself what is the best thing to do.
Cognitive Awareness Personal responsibility appears dependent on our ability to identify and manipulate our thoughts, feelings, and behavioural responses. Some participants were very clear about being able to choose their responses, while others felt that sometimes the choice was out of their hands.	"I think we can [control our emotions], you can change your thinking." "I am probably unable to control my anger." "[Emotions] come out whenever they feel like it." "It's your choice how you behave, there's always another option." "I would like to say that I can control my behaviour but I lash out when I'm all stirred up." "There was this boy and I choked him. I don't know what made me do it, I just lost my temper with him." 'I don't think adolescents are aware that they are making a choice. It's automatic, as opposed to something that's thought out in a cognitive process."	3. I often lash out when I am all stirred up. 4. I often lose my temper and am unable to control my behaviour. 5. People often make me feel emotions like anger or sadness. 6. When I am feeling emotions I don't like, I am able to change my thinking and make myself feel better. 7. I can choose how I behave. 8. I choose how to respond in situations. 9. When it comes to my behaviour I have set guidelines that I expect myself to follow. 10. If someone upsets me, it is not my fault if I am mean to them. 11. Friends can often talk me into doing things that I know may not be right. 12. It is up to me to control my behaviour. 13. I cannot control my behaviour. 14. When I am angry or sad I can usually work out why. 15. Sometimes people make me so mad that I can't control my behaviour. 16. I have set goals and believe in working hard to meet them. 17. I believe if you work hard you will succeed. 18. I can choose how I feel about things that happen to me. 19. My emotion comes out whenever they fel like it and there is little I can do about it. 20. It is my choice whether or not I do well in school. 21. I control the choices I make.
Consideration of Consequences Most participants talked about the importance of consequences in relation to P.R. Some participants felt that it was important to take P.R. to avoid negative consequences. Others talked about a lack of consequences in their life regardless of their behaviour.	"Our parents reaction is fair because we have broken the rules and should expect punishment." "[It is important to take personal responsibility] because if not there'll be consequences that you may not like, so to avoid this you have to follow the rules." "[It is important to take personal responsibility] because if you don't you'll get punished." "I don't think they consider the consequences their actions will have or how the person that they're affecting will feel about it."	22. I am always getting in trouble for things that aren't my fault. 23. I think of the consequences of my actions before doing something. 24. If I don't follow rules I expect to get into trouble. 25. When I have done the wrong thing, I accept the punishment.
Self-management/Self-control The teachers focused on the need for students to master self-management and self-control in order to achieve personal responsibility. Indeed, students who felt they could control their own behaviour stated being confident in taking personal responsibility.	"I think lack of self-control goes hand in hand with not accepting personal responsibility." "That's another thing with responsibility there, whether they have the skills to manage themselves because…to be responsible for homework and uniform they need to have some sort of management skills."	26. I am able to organise myself so that I have everything I need for school. 27. I often think about what everts are coming up and ensure 28. How well I get on with others depends on how well I treat them. 29. I treat others with respect because that is how I would like to be treated. 30. I am a well-organised person. 31. I can plan ahead to make sure I have the equipment I need for school. 32. It is not my fault if I do not bring my equipment to school.
Social Responsibility Both students and teachers talked about the impact taking personal responsibility has on their maturity and personal sense of being a good person. Many participants stated that considering one's impact on other people and demonstrating your maturity in this way was a sign of developing personal responsibility.	"[Taking personal responsibility] helps you mature." "[Taking personal responsibility] helps you become a better person." "[Personal responsibility is about] servitude. You sacrifice a little bit of yourself for the sake of others." "[Personal responsibility has] repercussions for others and these can be positive if you take personal responsibility - others can benefit." "If you are personally responsible you demonstrate respect, awareness and concern for the well-being of others."	33. If I have said or done something that has hurt someone else, I am prepared to put things right. 34. I am aware of how my behaviour impacts on other people.

Peer Review. In line with recommendations provided by Frazer and Lawley (2000), the draft 100-item measure was submitted to an expert panel of three for consideration. Feedback from this panel lead to adjustments with the Likert scale

(the neutral option was removed), and minor adjustments to the wording of various items in order to make the words used understandable to adolescents.

Step 2 – Questionnaire Administration

Pilot sample. The pilot sample consisted of 513 (F = 263, M = 250) secondary school students enrolled in Years 9 to 12 in two public schools in the south-eastern part of Queensland, Australia. The students had a mean age of 14.74 years (SD = 1.17 years), with 27.9% in Year 9, 34.1% in Year 10, 20.5% in Year 11, and 17.5% in Year 12. The schools were suburban and based in medium-sized cities. In order to determine the socioeconomic status of participants drawn from this sample group, the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Socio-Economic Index for Area (2001) was consulted. This index provides a continuum of advantage and disadvantage of suburbs based on socioeconomic status. Values range from 1 to 10, with low values indicating areas of disadvantage and high values indicating areas of advantage. Both high schools used in this study had a ranking of 8, showing themselves to be areas with high levels of socioeconomic advantage (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

Measure. The Personal Responsibility Questionnaire was administered to participants (see Appendix E). This questionnaire comprises 100 items that measure aspects of personal responsibility and uses a Likert scale for measurement with *1* being *strongly disagree* and *4* being *strongly agree.* Participants are asked to circle the response that appears true of them most of the time. Examples of items include, *"I often lash out when I am all stirred up,"* and *"I choose how to respond in situations."*

Procedure. Participants were recruited differently at each school. At school one, the researcher attended tutorial classes held for Year 11 and 12 students, explained the nature of the research, and advised participants that they would be asked to complete the questionnaire two weeks in the future. At school two, the year level coordinators for Years 9 and 10 handed out the parent information sheet to students and advised them of the nature of the research. These students were advised that they would be asked to complete the questionnaire one week later during their form class period. Students at both schools were advised that the parent information sheets must be given to their parents, and it was clearly detailed on this sheet that parents must contact the school if they did not wish their child to participate in the study (see Appendix F). Students were informed that their participation was voluntary and they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, even if their parents had consented to their participation.

As the questionnaire was presented to students in their form/tutorial classes at both schools, it was impossible for the researcher to address each class before they completed the instrument. To ensure important information was conveyed, a script was written by the researcher and read by the teacher to the students in each form class (see Appendix G). In this way, students were advised that their participation was voluntary and confidential, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without comment or penalty. Students read the information sheet (see Appendix H), completed the questionnaire in class time and handed the questionnaire to the teacher before leaving the room. These were then handed to

either the year level coordinator or the Guidance Officer, who handed them to the researcher.

Data issues. Coakes and Steed (2003) highlighted that an appropriate sample size for survey instruments is five participants per variable. Thus the 100-item Personal Responsibility Questionnaire was administered as a pilot to 543 adolescents. Questionnaire item results were entered into an SPSS data file. Initial culling included deleting the results of student who had 40% or more of the items unanswered, and those questionnaires that were completed inaccurately. This inaccuracy was determined by questionnaires where obvious patterns were evident in the responses, such as answering 1 for question 1, 2 for question 2, 3 for question 3, 4 for question 4, and repeating this format throughout the entire questionnaire. The final number of respondents included in the pilot study was 513, enough to allow for reliable and valid statistical analyses (Coakes & Steed, 2003; Keppel, 1991).

The 513 questionnaires used were analysed for any abnormalities in relation to missing data. The missing data were found to have no particular pattern, and were replaced in the data set by establishing the item mean for each item and inserting these in the place of the missing values (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Coakes and Steed (2003) argue that using mean substitution allows for the inclusion of all cases in the analysis, strengthening the final results. As a number of items on the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire were negatively scored, it was necessary to recode these items. In total 38 items were recoded into new variables, where a

score of 4 (strongly agree) became a score of 1 (strongly disagree) and a score of 3 (agree) became a score of 2 (disagree) (Coakes & Steed, 2003).

Step 3 – Initial Item Reduction

In order to determine the most statistically significant items to retain in the final Personal Responsibility Questionnaire, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and reliability analysis in the form of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha including item total correlation) were performed. Factor analysis is used to reduce a large number of items into a smaller set of underlying factors (Hinkin, 1998). The use of EFA was beneficial as the current study sought to explore the structure of the personal responsibility construct. Further, EFA assists in determining whether items are tapping into the same construct, an essential aspect when assessing the validity of a questionnaire (Coakes & Steed, 2003). Reliability analysis is useful as it illustrates which items are valuable to retain when creating a revised version of a current measure (Hinkin, 1998). The analysis reveals how test items are associated with each other, allowing the researcher to choose only those items that statistically contribute to the test as a whole (Huck, 2004).

Unidimensionality of the Items. It is essential that unidimensionality of a measure be established before the reliability of a measure is assessed (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). As Cronbach's alpha highlights how well a set of items measure a single unidimensional latent construct (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996), this analysis was performed on all 100 items. The initial analysis revealed an alpha of .93,

demonstrating excellent internal consistency reliability. The items in the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire appear to measure one underlying construct.

As a goal of the current study was to explore the structure of the personal responsibility construct, the use of EFA was highly advantageous. In SPSS, a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was used, with a varimax rotation (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). For this analysis, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy was .89 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant (< .001). The factor analysis highlighted two main factors. Both factors had eigenvalues greater than 1, and accounted for 25.4% of the variance in total. Factor 1 accounted for 16.2% of variance and factor 2 accounted for 9.2%. Items 52, 55, and 86 did not load on any factor and so were deleted from any further analyses. Table 6.3 shows each item and factor loadings for factor 1 and factor 2.

Item-total correlation. For factor 1 (initial α = .94, i = 62), and for factor 2 (initial α = .91, i = 38), each item was checked for its contribution to the overall scale. Table 6.4 shows the initial 62 items considered for factor 1 and Table 6.5 shows the initial 38 items considered for factor 2, and the item-total correlations of each item.

Table 6.3

Questionnaire Items and their Factor Loading on Factors 1 and 2

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
1. When making decisions, I decide for myself what is the best thing to do.	.39	
3. There is usually a connection between how hard I study and the grades I get.	.44	
4. I am mainly responsible for what happens to me.	.34	
5. If an activity makes me feel stressed, I can calm myself down so that I can continue with the activity.	.46	
7. I am able to organise myself so that I have everything I need for school.	.44	
9. I am aware of my emotions as I experience them.	.29	
12. When I experience a problem, I actively seek to resolve it.	.54	
13. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	.57	
14. I often think about what events are coming up and ensure I have everything I need to do well in these events.	.60	
15. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	.50	
17. Chance or luck does not usually play an important role in outcomes.	.23	
20. How well I got on with others depends on how well I treat them.	.35	
21. It is important to think before you act.	.60	
22. When I am feeling emotions I don't like, I am able to change my thinking and make myself feel better.	.40	
23. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.	.47	
24. Before I do something, I think about how it will affect the people around me.	.50	
25. I am mainly responsible for my future.	.51	
26. I have control over my emotions.	.52	
27. I usually stay focused on my goals and don't allow anything to distract me from my plan of action.	.53	
28. I try very hard not to hurt other people's feelings.	.46	
29. People can depend on me to do the right thing most of the time.	.57	
30. I can choose how I behave.	.63	
31. To succeed at school, I believe you have to work hard.	.62	
34. I choose how to respond in situations.	.50	
35. I want my actions to help other people.	.61	
36. When it comes to my behaviour I have set guidelines that I expect myself to follow.	.52	
37. I expect that I will do well on most things I try.	.52	
40. If I study hard, I will get better grades.	.45	
42. I am a well-organised person.	.50	
43. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	.61	
46. I treat others with respect because that is how I would like to be treated.	.64	
50. It is up to me to control my behaviour.	.66	
51. I am usually willing to admit my mistakes.	.54	
53. I believe if you try hard enough, there's usually a way to reach your goals.	.60	
56. If I have said or done something that has hurt someone else, I am prepared to put things right.	.51	
59. After reaching a goal I look for another, more challenging one.	.53	
60. I really care about how my actions might affect others.	.55	
65. I think about other people's feelings before I do something they might no like.	.50	
66. Becoming a success is a mater of hard work.	.51	
67. I think of the consequences of my actions before doing something.	.54	
70. I am aware of how my behaviour impacts on other people.	.49	
72. I have a responsibility to make the world a better place.	.45	

73. I stop and think things through before I act.	.52	
74. If I don't follow rules I expect to get into trouble.	.45	
75. I make sure that doing what I want will not cause problems for other people.	.48	
78. When I am angry or sad I can usually work out why.	.49	
80. What happens to me is mainly my own doing.	.36	
82. I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles.	.48	
85. I can plan ahead to make sure I have the equipment I need for school.	.59	
88. In my case, getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.	.60	
89. I have set goals and believe in working hard to meet them.	.63	
90. I think about how my behaviour will impact on other people.	.56	
91. I know why my emotions change.	.38	
93. I am mainly responsible for my success in school.	.60	
95. I believe if you work hard you will succeed.	.60	
96. I can choose how I feel about things that happen to me.	.33	
97. When I have done the wrong thing, I accept the punishment.	.55	
98. It is my choice whether or not I do well in school.	.49	
99. I control the choices I make.	.58	
2. I often lash out when I am all stirred up.		.38
6. I often do things without giving them enough thought.		.41
8. Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.		.41
10. People who make me angry had better watch out.		.42
11. I often lose my temper and am unable to control my behaviour.		.38
16. Making choices doesn't get me anywhere because others decide for me anyway.		.35
18. People often make me feel emotions like anger or sadness.		.49
19. I am always getting in trouble for things that aren't my fault.		.46
32. I often do things that are really not fair to people I don't care about.		.46
33. Many of the unhappy things that occur in people's lives are partly due to bad luck.		.48
38. If someone upsets me, it is not my fault if I am mean to them.		.53
39. Other people decide what happens to me.		.44
41. When I'm angry I lose my temper and "let people have it.'		.46
44. I sometimes become "wild and crazy" and do things other people may not like.		.50
45. I sometimes think I won't get what I really want.		.36
47. I sometimes pick on people I don't like.		.58
48. I might as well give up because I can't make things better for myself.		.51
49. Friends can often talk me into doing things that I know may not be right.		.48
54. Doing well in school is a matter of luck and not choice.		.49
57. I cannot control my behaviour.		.53
58. I believe it is usually best to cover up my mistakes.		.54
61. If I feel like it, I hit people.		.40
62. Many times I might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.		.47
63. Sometimes I can't understand how teachers arrive at the grades they give.		.44
64. It is not my fault if I do not bring my equipment to school.		.55
68. I don't plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a mater of good or bad luck anyhow.		.45
69. Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.		.48
71. If teachers put in more effort I would do better at school.		.48
76. When I am mad, I yell at people.		.50
77. I would chat on an exam if I knew no one would find out.		.48

79. I do whatever I feel like doing.	.53
81. If I want to risk getting in trouble, that is my business and nobody else's.	.51
83. I don't owe the world anything.	.54
84. I have a whole bunch of thoughts and feelings that often distract me from what I am trying to do.	.52
87. Sometimes people make me so mad that I can't control my behaviour.	.65
92. It is often difficult for me to stop thoughts that interfere with what I need to do.	.50
94. I often say the first thing that comes into my mind without really thinking about it.	.50
100. My emotions come out whenever they feel like it and there is little I can do about it.	.55

Table 6.4

Factor 1 Items and their Corrected Item-Total Correlations.

Factor 1, í = 62	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Factor 1, í = 62	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
**Q1	.36	τQ50	.64
**Q3	.42	Q51	.51
**Q4	.32	**Q52	.10
**Q5	.44	Q53	.57
**Q7	.41	**Q55	.11
**Q9	.27	Q56	.48
Q12	.51	Q59	.51
τQ13	.55	Q60	.53
τQ14	.58	τQ65	.47
Q15	.47	Q66	.48
**Q17	.23	Q67	.52
**Q20	.33	Q70	.47
Q21	.56	**Q72	.43
**Q22	.38	Q73	.50
τQ23	.45	**Q74	.43
Q24	.48	Q75	.45
Q25	.48	Q78	.47
Q26	.50	**Q80	.35
Q27	.51	Q82	.46
**Q28	.43	Q85	.57
Q29	.54	**Q86	.11
Q30	.60	Q88	.57
Q31	.59	Q89	.61
τQ34	.47	τQ90	.53
Q35	.58	**Q91	.37
Q36	.50	Q93	.57
Q37	.49	Q95	.57
**Q40	.42	**Q96	.31
Q42	.48	Q97	.53
Q43	.58	Q98	.46
Q46	.60	Q99	.55

**Items deleted due to revealing item-total correlations under .45.

τ Repetitious items deleted to create shorter measure.

Table 6.5

Factor 2 Items and their Corrected Item Total Correlations

Factor 2, í = 38	Corrected item-total correlations	Factor 2, í = 38	Corrected item-total correlations
**Q2	.34	Q57	.51
**Q6	.36	Q58	.49
**Q8	.37	**Q61	.38
**Q10	.39	**Q62	.44
**Q11	.37	**Q63	.39
**Q16	.34	Q64	.51
**Q18	.44	**Q68	.42
**Q19	.43	**Q69	.44
**Q32	.42	**Q71	.43
**Q33	.44	Q76	.45
Q38	.50	**Q77	.44
**Q39	.41	Q79	.47
**Q41	.43	Q81	.45
Q44	.46	Q83	.48
**Q45	.32	Q84	.46
Q47	.52	Q87	.61
Q48	.48	**Q92	.44
**Q49	.44	Q94	.46
***Q54	.46	Q100	.50

**Items deleted due to revealing item-total correlations under .45.

***Item deleted due to revealing a low item-total correlation (.38) after first set of items deleted and item-total correlations checked again.

Item Reduction

As suggested by Hinkin (1998), items with a low corrected item-total correlation should be deleted as they do not add to the statistical properties of the questionnaire. Removing unnecessary items usually serves to increase Cronbach's alpha, hence increasing the questionnaire's overall reliability (Howell, 1997). Hemphill (2003) suggests that items with a correlation magnitude of at least .30 and greater may be retained. However, Hinkin (1998) notes that if removing only those items under .30 leaves a greater number of valid items than desired, the

researcher may choose to eliminate those items that will not negatively affect the reliability of the test. As this was the case in the present study, all items with a correlation magnitude of .45 or below were removed. Through this process, factor 1 retained 43 items (α = .94). In addition, in order to create a succinct measure, items that were closely worded and appeared repetitious were removed (Hinkin, 1998). This process resulted in the deletion of seven more items (refer to Table 6.4 for those items that were deleted at this stage), leaving 36 items. Example items that were deleted include Item 90, 'I think about how my behaviour will affect others', as it was seen to replicate Item 24, 'Before I do something, I think about how it will affect the people around me' and Item 50, 'It is up to me to control my behaviour', as it was seen to replicate Item 36, 'When it comes to my behaviour I have set guidelines that I expect myself to follow' and Item 57, 'I can not control my behaviour'. Francis (2004) argues that for a scale to be considered reliable, Cronbach's alpha must be at least 0.7. The alpha for the 36 items in factor 1 shows the items to be reliable at α = .94. See Table 6.6 for the items used in factor 1 in the second version of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire.

Similarly for factor 2, item-total correlations were assessed and all items with a correlation magnitude of .45 and below were removed, leaving 15 items. The alpha for the 15 items in factor 2 shows the items to be reliable at α = .85. See Table 6.6 for the items used in factor 2 in the second version of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire.

Table 6.6

The Items used in the Second Version of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire

Factor 1, í = 36	Factor 2, í = 15
Item 12: When I experience a problem, I actively seek to resolve it.	Item 38: If someone is mean to me, it is not my fault if I am mean to them.
Item 15: It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	Item 44: I sometimes become "wild and crazy" and do things other people may not like.
Item 21: It is important to think before you act.	Item 47: I sometimes pick on people I don't like.
Item 24: Before I do something, I think about how it will affect the people around me.	Item 48: I might as well give up because I can't make things better for myself.
Item 25: I am mainly responsible for my future.	Item 57: I can not control my behaviour.
Item 26: I have control over my emotions.	Item 58: I believe it is usually best to cover up my mistakes.
Item 27: I usually stay focused on my goal and don't allow anything to distract me from my plan of action.	Item 64: It is not my fault if I do not bring my equipment to school.
Item 29: People can depend on me to do the right thing most of the time.	Item 76: When I am mad, I yell at people.
Item 30: I can choose how I behave.	
Item 31: To succeed at school, I believe you have to work hard.	Item 79: I do whatever I feel like doing.
Item 35: I want my actions to help other people.	Item 81: If I want to risk getting in trouble that is my business and nobody else's.
Item 36: When it comes to my behaviour, I have set guidelines that I expect myself to follow.	Item 83: I don't owe the world anything.
Item 37: I expect that I will do well on most things I try.	Item 84: I have a whole bunch of thoughts and feelings that often distract me from what I am trying to do.
	Item 87: Sometimes people make me so mad that I can't control my behaviour.
Item 42: I am a well organised person.	Item 94: I often say the first thing that comes into my mind without really thinking about it.
	Item 100: My emotions come out whenever they feel like it and there is little I can do about it.
Item 43: I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	
Item 46: I treat others with respect because that is how I would like to be treated.	
Item 51: I am usually willing to admit my mistakes.	
Item 53: I believe if you try hard enough there's usually a way to reach your goals.	
Item 56: If I have said or done something that has hurt someone, I am prepared to put things right.	
Item 59: After reaching a goal, I look for another more challenging one.	
Item 60: I really care about how my actions might affect others.	
Item 66: Becoming a success is a matter of hard work.	
Item 67: I think of the consequences of my actions before doing something.	
Item 70: I am aware of how my behaviour impacts on other people.	
Item 73: I stop and think things through before I act.	
Item 75: I make sure that doing what I want will not cause problems for other people.	
Item 78: When I am angry or sad I can usually work out why.	
Item 82: I use good moods to help keep myself trying in the face of obstacles.	
Item 85: I can plan ahead to make sure I have the equipment I need for school.	
Item 88: To make a good decision, it is important to think it through first.	
Item 89: I have set goals and believe in working hard to meet them.	
Item 93: I am mainly responsible for my success in school.	
Item 95: I believe if you work hard you will succeed.	
Item 97: When I have done the wrong thing, I accept the punishment.	
Item 98: It is my choice whether or not I do well in school.	
Item 99: I control the choices I make.	

Step 4 - Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Participants. A second sample of participants were 124 (F = 51, M = 73) predominantly middle-class secondary school students enrolled in Year 11 in one private school in the south-eastern part of Queensland, Australia. The students were aged between 15 and 17 years with a mean age of 15.98 years (SD = .62 years).

Measure. The refined 51-item (including the 36 items of factor 1 and the 15 items of factor 2) second version of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire was administered to participants (see Appendix I). Items were moved around so as to mix up factor 1 and factor 2 and prevent response bias from occurring. A Likert rating scale was used with *1* being *strongly disagree* and *4* being *strongly agree.* Participants are asked to circle the response that appears true of them most of the time.

Procedure. The 51-item questionnaire was administered to the students. Students were assembled as one large group and the researcher administered the questionnaire. A similar protocol to that used with the first sample was followed.

Data cleaning. The missing data was found to have no particular pattern, and was replaced in the data set by establishing the item mean for each item and inserting these in the place of the missing values (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). As a number of items on the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire were negatively scored, it was necessary to recode these items. In total, 15 items were recoded into new variables, where a score of 4 (strongly agree) became a score of 1 (strongly disagree) and a score of 3 (agree) became a score of 2 (disagree) (Coakes & Steed, 2003).

According to Hinkin (1998), a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is an essential

aspect of the scale development process as it allows for a quantifiable assessment

of the factor structure, providing further evidence of construct validity and enables

a qualification of the goodness of fit for each factor. In addition, the process of the

CFA for each factor provides an opportunity to further refine each factor by

deleting items that are not contributing to the factor (Hinkin, 1998). While a

sample size of 124 participants was relatively small, it was felt that undertaking a

CFA would generate informative and useful data.

In order to further refine the factors and to establish the goodness of fit of the final

factors, a CFA model was tested using AMOS 5.0. According to Hinkin (1998) the

fit statistics of the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Relative Noncentrality

Index (RNI) (also called the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Holmes-Smith, 2005) are

to be used to determine model fit in CFA and are appropriate for models with small

sample sizes, as in this case.

The CFA for factor 1 revealed a model where 17 items were retained from the

original 36. For factor 1 the model was acceptable $\chi^2 = 118.46$, $df = 117$, $\chi^2/df =$

1.013, $p = .445$, RMSEA = .010. Hinkin (1998) argued that a CFI with a value

greater than .90 is a reasonable fit. The CFI for the factor 1 in the current model

showed a more than reasonable fit of .99. The TLI shows acceptable levels when

greater than 0.95 (Holmes-Smith, 2005). The TLI for factor 1 in the current study

was .99. The critical ratio values, standardise regression and factor weights for the

items in factor 1 are reported in Table 6.7. The resulting internal consistency of

these 17 items was α = .87. Based on the remaining items, the corresponding name

for this factor was determined to be "self control of emotion and thoughts."

Table 6.7

The Final Items used in Factor 1 of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire,

C.R. Values, Standardised Regression and Factor Weights

Item Number	C.R. value	Standardized Regression Weights	Factor Weights
PRQ2	7.791*	.738	.129
PRQ5	4.367*	.417	.027
PRQ51	6.799*	.645	.074
PRQ15	5.260*	.501	.050
PRQ13	4.449*	.424	.040
PRQ11	6.468*	.614	.073
PRQ10	4.766*	.454	.041
PRQ23	3.757*	.358	.033
PRQ29	6.076*	.577	.064
PRQ33	5.873*	.559	.050
PRQ37	4.218*	.402	.038
PRQ42	6.545*	.621	.095
PRQ44	Constrained in model	.729	.127
PRQ19	7.178*	.681	.114
PRQ24	4.136*	.395	.026
PRQ28	4.784*	.456	.033
PRQ35	4.479*	.427	.034

* = significant at $p < .05$ level.

The CFA for factor 2 revealed a model where 13 items were retained from the

original 16 items. For factor 2 the model was acceptable $\chi2 = 63.378$, df $= 61$,

$\chi2/df = 1.039$, p = .393, RMSEA = .018.   The CFI for the factor 2 model showed a

reasonable fit of .99.   The TLI for factor 2 in the current study was .99.   The

critical ratio values, standardised regression and factor weights for the items in

factor 2 are reported in Table 6.8. The resulting internal consistency of these 13

items was α = .79. Based on the remaining items, the corresponding name for this

factor was determined to be "self control of behaviour."

Table 6.8

The Final Items used in Factor 2 of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire,

C.R. Values, Standardised Regression and Factor Weights

Item Number	C.R. value	Standardized Regression Weights	Factor Weights
PRQ1	5.123*	.499	.092
PRQ4	4.418*	.438	.118
PRQ7	5.052*	.492	.082
PRQ12	Constrained in model	.766	.232
PRQ14	2.315	.299	.012
PRQ20	4.868*	.476	.102
PRQ22	3.668*	.360	.046
PRQ27	5.855*	.575	.130
PRQ30	3.802*	.375	.070
PRQ34	6.832*	.663	.142
PRQ38	4.901*	.478	.085
PRQ43	2.776	.273	.039
PRQ47	5.111*	.498	.083

* = significant at *p* < .05 level.

The Personal Responsibility Questionnaire

Research Question 2. Can a quantitative questionnaire define and measure an adolescent's level of personal responsibility?

A process of analysis including EFA in SPSS and CFA in AMOS has refined the original set of 100 items to a 30-item measure (see Appendix J). The two models have reasonably good levels of fit and provide support for a two factor measure of personal responsibility which has strong structural properties and strong internal reliability and which is considered appropriate for use as a measure of personal responsibility. See Table 6.9 for the complete list of 30 items used in the final Personal Responsibility Questionnaire.

The final 30-item measure was created using appropriate statistical analyses and allowed for a quantitative evaluation of the Personal Responsibility Program (see Chapter 8). The following chapter describes the creation and implementation of the Personal Responsibility Program in one high school.

Table 6.9

The Final Items used in the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire

Factor 1, í = 18	Factor 2, í = 12
Item 12: When I experience a problem, I actively seek to resolve it.	Item 38: If someone is mean to me, it is not my fault if I am mean to them.
Item 25: I am mainly responsible for my future.	Item 44: I sometimes become "wild and crazy" and do things other people may not like.
Item 27: I usually stay focused on my goal and don't allow anything to distract me from my plan of action.	Item 47: I sometimes pick on people I don't like.
Item 29: People can depend on me to do the right thing most of the time.	Item 48: I might as well give up because I can't make things better for myself.
Item 30: I can choose how I behave.	Item 57: I can not control my behaviour.
Item 35: I want my actions to help other people.	Item 58: I believe it is usually best to cover up my mistakes.
Item 37: I expect that I will do well on most things I try.	Item 64: It is not my fault if I do not bring my equipment to school.
Item 42: I am a well organised person.	Item 76: When I am mad, I yell at people.
Item 43: I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	Item 81: If I want to risk getting in trouble that is my business and nobody else's.
Item 51: I am usually willing to admit my mistakes.	Item 84: I have a whole bunch of thoughts and feelings that often distract me from what I am trying to do.
Item 60: I really care about how my actions might affect others.	Item 87: Sometimes people make me so mad that I can't control my behaviour.
Item 70: I am aware of how my behaviour impacts on other people.	Item 100: My emotions come out whenever they feel like it and there is little I can do about it.
Item 75: I make sure that doing what I want will not cause problems for other people.	
Item 78: When I am angry or sad I can usually work out why.	
Item 85: I can plan ahead to make sure I have the equipment I need for school.	
Item 88: To make a good decision, it is important to think it through first.	
Item 97: when I have done the wrong thing, I accept the punishment.	
Item 98: It is my choice whether or not I do well in school.	

CHAPTER 7: STUDY 3 CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING THE PERSONAL

RESPONSIBILITY PROGRAM

Chapter 6 demonstrated the creation and analysis of the Personal Responsibility

Questionnaire that was to serve as a key way to evaluate the Personal

Responsibility Program. The present chapter provides insight into the decisions

made when creating the Personal Responsibility Program. The pedagogical

choices are discussed, an analysis of the lessons and activities are presented, and

the steps taken to prepare the teachers to implement this program are highlighted.

The chapter closes with a presentation of the qualitative feedback provided by

students and teachers after experiencing the Personal Responsibility Program. The

quantitative data evaluating the program's effectiveness are presented in Chapter 8.

The Personal Responsibility (PR) Program was developed using data obtained from

the student and teacher focus groups (see Chapter 5 for a complete discussion of

this data), literature on adolescent moral and cognitive development and

constructivist teaching for adolescents (see Chapters 2 and 3 for a review of this

literature), existing programs that aim to teach values to adolescents within the

school environment (Gholar, Hixson, & Riggs, 1996; Josephson Institute of Ethics,

1993), and through consultation with the relevant high school. Study 3 addressed

the following research questions, *"Can a program aimed at enhancing the*

personal responsibility level of adolescents be taught in a high school and

demonstrate measurable effect?" and *"Is there a relationship between personal*

responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem?"

Development of the Program

Initially, the main themes identified from the focus group data and discussed in Chapter 5 provided a framework from which to centre lesson plans. It was evident that personal responsibility revolved around pertinent issues of:

- Understanding choices and their consequences;

- Understanding and identifying emotions and exercising emotional control,

- Exercising behavioural control;

- Accepting that we have the power of choice in all situations and are not passive victims of circumstance;

- Appreciating a connection between our rights and the responsibilities that correspond;

- Acknowledging that the level of freedom afforded us is often a product of how responsibly we behave;

- Considering the impact our behaviour has on other people; and

- Developing genuine concern for the ways in which our choices may impact on others.

These key themes served to generate a long list of potential lessons. In order to create a concise program, overlapping themes were combined and all themes were refined. This was done by undertaking a second thorough analysis of the focus group data (discussed in Chapter 5), generating succinct definitions of the key themes to clarify their meaning, and combining and separating various topics to determine commonalities and differences. Lesson ideas were continually compared with each other to ensure that the same messages were not highlighted in every

lesson, and that a progression of understanding around the key themes emerged.

As a result, the program focused on six key themes:

- Choices;

- Consequences;

- Emotional Awareness;

- Awareness of Rights;

- Awareness of Responsibilities; and

- Social Responsibility.

Thus the program became a series of five lessons as follows:

1. Overview of the Personal Responsibility Program. This initial lesson focuses on introducing the notion of personal responsibility. Adolescents are challenged to consider how the construct applies in their own lives, and to identify areas in which they do, and do not, take personal responsibility. This is very important as for most adolescents this is the first time they have been asked to consider this. Further, this lesson sets the scene as to the tone of the program, increases adolescent awareness of what to expect from the program, flags fun activities in later lessons, and starts their cognitive wheels turning.

2. Choices and Consequences. Adolescents undertake a range of activities (small group work, role play, class discussion) that encourage them to consider possible choices in a given situation, and the consequences that may result from these choices. Often adolescents are not aware that there are more choices than the obvious ones.

3. Knowing and Understanding Yourself and Others. Adolescents complete a personality quiz and discuss ways to identify their emotional cues. They are also challenged to consider that different people respond differently and that this needs

to be respected. In pairs, students discuss a time they impacted negatively on someone and are questioned with a focus on why they chose to respond the way they did. Students consider how their actions impact on others.

4. Rights and Responsibilities. Adolescents consider the responsibilities that are inherent in the rights they desire. They also discuss personal power, the idea that they are powerful beings due to their power of choice.

5. Social Responsibility. Adolescents create their own island on a poster and in small groups determine what rules their island will have in place. They examine how these laws protect people and how they restrict people. Each student is given a role to play (such as a police officer or a pregnant woman) and they are to consider what rules are important from the perspective of these people. Students consider how the actions of people within a community impact on the rest of the community.

After establishing the overall theme for each lesson, activities were developed to assist in facilitation of the main components. Of these activities, most were created in their entirety by the researcher. A range of activities were informed from related values-based education activities or programs (Gholar et al., 1996; Josephson Institute of Ethics, 1993). These sources offered example questions, possible conundrums and moral dilemmas for students to discuss, and interesting ways of incorporating group work, pair work, whole class work, and individual work. While these activities and programs helped inform those used in the Personal Responsibility Program, no activities were taken from these programs without being heavily modified for the adolescent population they were to serve.

Each lesson was then designed in the format of a standard lesson plan with aims, objectives, activities and pedagogical strategies. The lesson plans provided a clear overview of what was to be taught each lesson, why it was deemed appropriate, what outcomes should be met, and what evaluative tools were to be used. Additionally, all resource sheets that were needed to undertake each lesson were created. Presenting the program in this way meant that it would appear in a format teachers were familiar with and thus aid their delivery of the material.

Reviewers' Feedback

Before implementation, the Personal Responsibility Program was reviewed by two academics in the Faculty of Education at the Queensland University of Technology, one of whom had previously taught adolescents in a secondary school. Feedback from these reviewers highlighted that the program was concise and appropriate, with lessons that reinforced the main themes that were to be expressed. Minor adjustments to all lesson plans were noted, such as providing timeframes for each activity and listing all resources that would be needed for each lesson.

An important comment by one reviewer was that each lesson could be scripted in order to offer teachers a greater understanding of the aims of each activity and to increase the conformity of delivery during the pilot implementation. Discussions between the researcher and her contact at the relevant state high school in which the program was to be conducted had established that the program would be run concurrently in four form classes. This meant that the researcher would not be able to teach each lesson to all students, and would instead rotate between each form

class during implementation, co-presenting with the teacher. As such, the use of a

script to serve as a guide for teachers was deemed extremely valuable. Scripts for

each lesson were created that highlighted the aim of each activity and offered

possible avenues for teachers to venture down in order to increase the adolescents'

understanding of the main themes. The following is a small script excerpt from

one lesson.

Lesson 3 – Knowing and Understanding Yourself and Others

Activity B – (20 minutes)

Aim is to get students to realise that different people feel and react differently in various situations. This should get them thinking about the way they react and that they may misunderstand others reactions.

For the next activity, you need to stay in these same groups. *[If there are a lot of people in one group, the teacher can break them up into two or three groups].* I'm going to give you all a handout called 'Understanding My Responses.' In your group, I would like you to discuss each statement and fill in the answers that apply to your group. If there are differences between people in your group, write those down. You have 10 minutes to fill this sheet out and I'll hand it out now. Please start as soon as you get the sheet. *[Teacher to hand sheet out around class]. [After 10 minutes, teacher can check how everyone is going, have they finished filling in the sheet? Teacher to ask some targeted questions].* Okay, in doing that exercise, what did you notice about people's responses? Were all responses the same? What does this tell us about understanding ourselves and others? *[What the teacher is looking for here is that we are all different, and we all respond to things differently, therefore we need to remember that when dealing with other people, and be tolerant and compassionate].*

As the researcher would not be personally overseeing the implementation of every

lesson in every class, the reviewers suggested that it would be advantageous to

provide a feedback sheet for students and teachers to fill in at the end of every

lesson. This would allow the researcher greater insight into what had taken place

in each classroom during the lessons and offer qualitative evaluations of the

program's implementation. The researcher decided that each lesson would end

with 10 minutes devoted to student and teacher completion of the feedback sheet.

The feedback sheet for students (see Appendix K) asked them to comment on the

preceding lesson, including something new they had learned, something that had

challenged them, something that was good about the lesson, something that was bad about the lesson and provided space for any additional comments they had. This feedback sheet allowed students to articulate their concerns, ideas and suggestions to the researcher. As educators have often overlooked students feelings toward their learning (Cook-Sather, 2003), the feedback sheets were to serve as a primary way in which student's could voice their opinions. The teacher feedback sheet (see Appendix L) asked teachers to comment on how they felt the lesson went, and to provide any interesting comments, observations, or ideas offered by any students during the lesson.

Further feedback from the reviewers led to an adjustment with the second activity in Lesson 1. In this activity, adolescents were asked to move to one of three positions around the classroom, depending on whether they agree, somewhat agree, or disagree with a range of statements. Initially, each statement was worded in first person such as, "I can decide how I feel in a given situation, no matter how negative the situation may seem." It was suggested that each statement be reworded to the third person such as, "People can decide how they will feel in a given situation, no matter how negative the situation may seem." This wording was expected to result in a greater willingness of adolescents to undertake the activity openly and without fear of retribution for their answers. Presenting the statements in the third person removed the focus from what the adolescents themselves chose and directed it to what they believed other people chose. This activity enabled the adolescents and teachers to gain insight into how adolescents currently felt about personal responsibility. See Table 7.1 for a summary of the activities used in the Personal Responsibility Program.

Table 7.1

A Summary of the Activities used in the Personal Responsibility Program

LESSON 1 – OVERVIEW OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY PROGRAM

A) **10 minutes** – Hand out "Overview of PR program." Go through length of program, what topics are each week, feedback expectation, different types of activities.

B) **20 minutes** - Around the classroom are the words Agree, Sometimes Agree, and Disagree. The teacher reads a statement and students move to the position they support. Students then discuss with others in the same position why they chose that position.

C) **5 minutes** – How would you define personal responsibility? Discuss using OHT with definition.

D) **5 minutes** - Step 1: Hand out "My list of responsibilities" activity sheet. Individually, students write down: What responsibilities do you believe you personally have for: 1) yourself, 2) your family, 3) your community, 4) the world?
10 minutes - Step 2: Students pair up with the person sitting next to them and compare and discuss their answers.
Essential closing activity

E) **10 minutes** - Students are asked to consider the lesson they have just had and provide feedback about it on the "My thoughts and reflections on today" sheet. Teachers are to collect these sheets at the end of the lesson.

LESSON 2 – CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES

A) **15 minutes -** In small groups, students read through and discuss a scenario with a dilemma and write down the choices available to them and the possible consequences. Group makes choice and must justify.

B) **10 minutes** – Step 1: Students get into groups of three and act out a role-play scenario where a difficult choice must be made.
10 minutes - Step 2: Advise students to make a decision and answer the discussion questions. Students are to discuss how they feel about the decision, making the decision, and what consequences could result from the decision.

C) **15 minutes -** Teacher to ask students as whole class for examples from either their own lives or the lives of people they know where there have been difficult choices to make and consequences to consider. Discuss what choices were made, why people might make those choices; note any impacts on other people from those choices.
Essential closing activity

D) **10 minutes -** Complete "My thoughts and reflections on today" sheet and collect.

LESSON 3 – KNOWING AND UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF AND OTHERS

A) **15 minutes** – Students complete a "Personality Quiz" and then get into groups with others who scored the same category.

B) **20 minutes** - Students are given a sheet examining emotions called "Understanding my Responses." Students answer the questions/statements in their group and report back to the class. Teacher asks the class what they noticed about other people's responses. Were all responses the same? What does this tell us about understanding ourselves and other people?

C) **15 minutes -** Students pick a partner from a different group. In pairs, students discuss a time they impacted negatively on someone due to their feelings and actions. Answer questions on "Appreciating my impact on others" sheet, including: Why did it happen (what were they thinking, feeling etc. – what was their role in it?). What could they have done differently?
Essential closing activity

D) **10 minutes -** Complete "My thoughts and reflections on today" sheet and collect.

LESSON 4 – RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A) **10 minutes -** Ask students, "How would you define/explain/understand a right?" Discuss. Then put up OHT with definition. Ask students, "How would you define/explain/understand a responsibility?" Discuss. Then put up OHT with definition.

B) **15 minutes** – Students get into groups of three or four. Teacher gives each group a bag that has words in it and the "Rights and Responsibilities" sheet. Students choose the words that they feel are their rights and the responsibilities that go with them.

C) **5 minutes -** Step 1: Students watch section of "Spiderman" video and answer the questions: 1. What does Uncle Ben feel that Peter does not have the right to do? 2. Why does Uncle Ben feel that Peter is now in an important stage of his life? 3. Fill in the blanks on the quote that Uncle Ben says to Peter: With _____ _____ comes great _____.
5 minutes - Step 2: Students call out answers and are asked to focus on question 3. Teacher asks: What does this statement mean? Do you agree? Why/why not? Do you think this statement applies more as you get older? Why/why not?

D) **15 minutes -** Teacher discusses Peter having "great power" and making choices that will define the man he becomes. Teacher asks class, "What do you think personal power may refer to?" Discuss. Teacher provides an explanation of personal power on OHT. Ask students what power and responsibilities are specific to their age, increased maturity, increased freedom, and young adulthood. Do they have power and responsibilities now that they didn't have when they were younger?
Essential closing activity

E) **10 minutes -** Complete "My thoughts and reflections on today" sheet and collect.

LESSON 5 – SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

A) **5 minutes –** Ask students what they think social responsibility is about. Discuss. Put up OHT with definition.

B) **20 minutes** - Step 1: Students imagine that they are the only people on an uninhabited island and as a group of six they must come up with 10 rules that will determine how their island runs. Teacher hands out a piece of butchers paper, felt pens, a sheet "Create your own island" with focus questions on it, and each group member gets given one card which has a role on it. Students are told to take on this role for the exercise, and consider what rules/laws the person in that role would think are necessary.
15 minutes - Step 2: In groups, students are to report their island name and their rules to the class. They are to read out their answers to the questions on their "Create your own island" sheet also.

C) **10 minutes -** Teacher asks students about rules. Why do we have them? Should we always follow rules? What happens when we don't follow the rules? What happens when we don't take responsibility? Do we have a responsibility toward others? Do people have a responsibility toward us? What are our social responsibilities?
Essential closing activity

D) **10 minutes -** Complete "My thoughts and reflections on today" sheet and collect.

The activities chosen for the Personal Responsibility Program were created to reflect the four components of personal responsibility. Asking students to consider their own level of personal responsibility in relation to a range of statements encouraged them to consider what they currently believed about personal responsibility, thus enhancing their awareness of their thoughts and feelings. Encouraging students to act out a scenario where a difficult choice had to be made, and then asking them to justify that choice, encouraged them to think about why they make the choices they make and what the potential consequences may be. Requiring students to complete a personality quiz and then examine the different personality types within the classroom allowed them to acknowledge this diversity. It is expected that a greater awareness of people and their differences would assist students when trying to be aware of the impact of their behaviour on others. A full outline of each lesson plan (including lesson aims and objectives) can be found in Appendix R.

Preparation of Teachers to Teach the Program

Before the program was implemented in the high school, training with the appropriate teachers occurred. This training was one hour long and occurred one week after each teacher had been given the program in order to familiarise themselves with its content. The teachers appeared confident and stated they were comfortable delivering the program. The training session focused on explaining the pedagogy underpinning the program and articulated why particular activities had been chosen and the aims and intentions of each lesson. The notion of

personal responsibility and differing opinions about it were discussed. The researcher highlighted her explanation of personal responsibility and showed how each lesson had been informed by this definition.

The constructivist notion of teaching was discussed with the teachers, and it was stressed that the students were to largely be encouraged to drive the direction of each lesson. Research has shown that students sometimes resist student-driven teaching, especially where they have been taught overwhelmingly by the traditional method (Gabler & Schroeder, 2003; Sion, 1999). As students are often taught with a teacher-centred approach in schools (Sion), teachers were asked to explain to their students that the students would be expected to direct the program and apply the concepts to their own lives. Additionally, it was felt that the teachers might struggle to offer students more control in the classroom. Biggs (1999) highlighted that the pedagogical shift from traditional didactic teaching to student-centred learning requires an adjustment in perception of the role of teacher for those who teach. Thus the researcher encouraged all teachers to consider ways to allow the students larger amounts of freedom without losing control of the class.

All teachers were given contact details for the researcher and the expected timetable for the researcher's appearance in their classroom was discussed. All teachers highlighted that they would like the researcher to teach the lesson she would be available for in their classroom. During this training session, it was agreed that a feedback meeting would be held with teachers and the researcher at the completion of the program's implementation. Teachers were asked to complete the teacher feedback sheets every week to assist in this process.

Pedagogical Approach

Teaching is a challenging activity (Brookfield, 1998). Traditional teaching

pedagogy viewed the teacher's role as imparting expert knowledge in a factual and

didactic way to unquestioning students (Brownlee, 2004). More recently the notion

of active learning, centred on the needs of individual students and their engagement

in relevant and dynamic learning environments, has emerged (Lea, Stephenson &

Troy, 2003). An influential theory that focuses on student activity is

constructivism.

Constructivism contends that students make meaning in their learning by active and

purposeful interaction with relevant educational stimuli and highlights the role of

the teacher as serving primarily as a facilitator and guide (Doolittle & Camp,

1999). The notion that adolescent learning must be relevant, sophisticated, and

student driven, coincides with the constructivist approach to teaching presented by

Doolittle and Camp. The Personal Responsibility Program was written to conform

to a constructivist framework. As such, activities used in the Personal

Responsibility Program were student-driven and -focused, scenarios used were

relevant to adolescents, students were encouraged to question their current level of

understanding and their beliefs, and teacher intervention in most activities was

minimal. Students were encouraged to take ownership of the activities by working

with each other to discuss and critique ideas.

In order to make the program relevant to the lives of adolescents, a fundamental component of constructivist teaching (Doolittle & Camp, 1999), popular culture resources were searched for appropriate stimuli. A range of researchers and educators espouse the use of popular culture in the classroom in order to engage and stimulate students with material relevant to youth culture (Allender, 2004; Callahan & Low, 2004; Evans, 2004). Popular culture is a valuable way in which to meet students where they are and link newly acquired knowledge to current understandings (Doolittle & Camp). It can also take material that may be viewed as boring and transform it into something relevant and fun (Biggs & Moore, 1993). Cooper and McIntyre (1996) found that the use of popular culture in the classroom is supported by students.

After wide searching of popular songs, televisions shows, and videos, the Spiderman movie was chosen to highlight the personal power, and resulting responsibility, that adolescents have. A two-minute section of this movie was used. In this scene, Uncle Ben asks Peter to consider whether his strength gives him the right to beat up kids at school, and to consider the man he is choosing to become. It was expected that adolescents would be familiar with this movie and would respond favourably to its inclusion in the program. Using media that students access willingly on their own is expected to increase their desire to undertake the program, and should serve to give the program credibility in the eyes of adolescents (Domoney & Harris, 1993). As the movie snippet was used in the fourth lesson, it was hoped that the students would look forward to this lesson and remain interested in the program. As such, Lesson 1 provided an overview of all lessons, in which the upcoming Spiderman video was highlighted.

Due to the school's timeframe of having 70-minute lessons available in which to implement the program, each lesson was 60 minutes long. A period of five minutes was allowed for students to get to class and get settled, 50 minutes were devoted to undertaking the activities, 10 minutes were devoted to student and teacher feedback on the provided sheets, leaving five minutes for students to pack up and make their way to morning tea. As activities were student-driven and involved lots of student discussion, one hour provided enough time to cover three or four activities in the depth required.

Within any classroom, a range of different learning styles is present. A student's learning style refers to their preferences for learning new information, for engaging and relating to others, and for particular types of classroom experiences and environments (Grasha, 1990). To cater for this range of learning styles, it was essential that the Personal Responsibility Program provided information in various ways. Lessons were structured so that the activities were a mixture of individual work, pair work, group work, and large class discussions, as well as utilising writing, drawing, discussion, acting, presenting, and video. Additionally, some activities required the students to get out of their seats and move around the classroom. This variety was expected to break any monotony, reenergize the students, hold their interest, and cater to different learning styles (Gabler & Schroeder, 2003).

As the Personal Responsibility Program drew heavily on concepts that adolescents may not have completely understood, a small part of most lessons was devoted to

teacher explanation of terms. This was achieved by using overhead transparencies (OHTs) with definitions. While this method does fall back on traditional notions of teaching, Gabler and Schroeder (2003) argued that lecture style teaching can be successfully incorporated into the student-centred approach if it is brief and used to clarify complex ideas. In order to keep the students interested and thinking, students were asked to challenge the definition offered. In this way it was hoped that students would not fall into traditional modes of learning where they expect the teacher to provide the answer. The students were continually encouraged to offer a critique of what they were hearing, or to articulate why they did agree with something.

While diverse activities and freedom for exploration were encouraged, teachers were instructed to intervene if students were having difficulty understanding the activity, if students appeared to be off track, or if the teacher felt they could stretch the students' current level of understanding. Two activities in the program were set up as large class discussions. This was done to allow the teacher a greater level of input into the direction of discussions when it was felt that a complex and fundamental aspect of the program was to be understood. While the discussions were still largely student-driven, the teacher could ask targeted questions in order to shift the students toward a fundamental understanding (Akerlind, 2003).

Types of Activities Used

A fundamentally important aspect of constructivist teaching involves understanding the learner's prior knowledge so as to effectively integrate new knowledge (Gabler & Schroeder, 2003). With this in mind, the first lesson focused

largely on allowing the students and the teachers to become aware of the students'
current understandings and insight into personal responsibility. One activity in this
lesson asked students to show whether they agreed, strongly agreed or disagreed
with a range of statements relating to personal responsibility. The teacher read the
statements aloud and the students moved around the room to stand by one of the
three categories (designated by a sign stuck on the wall). This activity allowed the
teacher some insight into how her students felt, offered the students a greater
awareness of their own views on the subject and allowed them to see how their
peers felt. Additionally, students were asked to individually consider what
responsibilities they felt they had for themselves, their family, their community and
their world, and were then paired up to share their answers and discuss differences
and similarities.

Often, as with the first activity described above, students debated each other's
viewpoints spontaneously and without teacher intervention. When these
discussions occurred, the students were encouraged to actively debate and disagree
with each other and make room for differing opinions. Doolittle and Camp (1999)
posit that learning should involve social negotiation and mediation with teachers
encouraging multiple perspectives. Some activities were created to purposefully
stimulate student discussion and generate complex thought processes. These
activities often centred on making difficult choices within challenging scenarios.
The following activity occurred during the second lesson on choices and
consequences.

"You have just won two tickets to a concert of your favourite band. You have two best friends who also love the band and both want to come, but you can only take one of them. What are you going to do?"

In the above scenario, students acted out a role-play in groups of three. Each student was given a particular role they were to play.   One student had won the two tickets to the concert and had to decide which friend to take, while the other two students had to argue as to why they should be the one chosen to attend the concert.   After completing the role-play, the students discussed the following questions:

1. How do you feel about the decision?

2. How did you feel trying to make the decision?

3. How did you feel trying to get your own way?

4. What did you consider when making your decision?

5. What consequences could result from the decision made?

6. Did you think about the consequences when trying to get your own way/making a decision?

The purpose of following up this activity with these questions was to encourage the students to consider the thoughts they had gone through while making their decisions. Doolittle and Camp (1999) argue that students must be encouraged to become self-regulatory and self-aware. Requiring students to reflect on their choices and the thinking that led to these choices is a valuable way to assist students in monitoring and controlling their thought processes (Boekaerts, 2002).

Potentially, a greater awareness of one's thought processes, and how these lead to one's choices, may result in a greater willingness to take personal responsibility for one's decisions.

In order to enhance the likelihood of students considering their viewpoint and how they arrived at that stance, the use of moral dilemmas was incorporated. The literature on adolescent moral and cognitive development highlighted that moral dilemmas have traditionally been used with some success when seeking to enhance adolescent moral understanding (Bandura, 1991; Bardige, 1988; Berzonsky, 2000; Byrnes, 2003; Kohlberg, 1976; Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971; Piaget, 1985). A moral dilemma was presented to students that highlighted a situation desirable to most adolescents. The scenario read as follows:

"You are a young actor. You have been offered a movie role that will make you famous and wealthy. There are some things you are not quite comfortable doing, however. The director says that if you want the role, you must do anything and everything you are requested to do, like it or not. She also reminds you that there are plenty of others waiting to take the part and have their chance at fame and fortune."

Adolescents were then asked, in small groups, to consider the range of choices that were available to them in this situation. They were required to write down a list of all choices available and the possible consequences that may arise as a result of each choice. This scenario was expected to challenge adolescents morally as they would have to consider whether they would "sell out" for fame and fortune. It was

also expected to heighten their awareness of the fact that most situations present many more choices than the obvious ones, which in this situation are to take the role or to not take the role. Additionally, the activity served to teach adolescents that consequences are inexplicably linked to the choices we make and that by choosing the choice, we choose the consequence. Students discussed their potential choices and consequences in small groups and were then required to make a group decision as to which choice they would make. This served to highlight the differences between people in the group and aimed at helping adolescents understand that there are many reasons why people make the decisions they ultimately make. As can be seen by this example, one activity served a range of purposes that dealt with the precise topic of the lesson they were undertaking, and those other topics that made up other lessons.

Feedback about the Personal Responsibility Program

Due to school timetabling constrictions, the second implementation of the Personal Responsibility Program occurred during 45-minute lessons. As such, the 10 minutes devoted to student feedback at the end of each lesson did not occur for those in the control group. The following qualitative student data therefore comes only from those students who undertook the program during its first implementation, those students in the experimental group. Similarly, the teacher feedback provided comes only from those teachers who taught the first implementation of the program, as school constraints did not allow a meeting to occur between the research and those teachers who taught the second implementation of the program.

At the end of each lesson, students in the experimental group and their teachers were asked to complete a feedback sheet on the lesson they had just undertaken (see Appendices K and L). This sheet asked them to note down something new they had learned, something that challenged them, something that worked well and for any other comments they wanted to make. Teachers who had taught the program during the first implementation (April – June) also participated in a focus group (two weeks after the completion of the program) to discuss the effectiveness of the program. The findings from this feedback that examines students' understanding of the key components of personal responsibility and students' and teachers' responses to the design and implementation of the program are discussed.

Student Feedback

Many of the students' responses focused around the ideas of choices, consequences and decision-making, highlighting an increase in awareness in these areas. Students' responses included:

- I learnt that we do make our own choices and we should take responsibility for them.

- I learnt that you have lots of different choices in any given situation.

- I learnt that it's not right to blame others for the choices you make.

- I learnt that decisions have a huge impact on our lives and should be considered thoroughly.

- I learnt that my choices and decisions affect other people as well as myself.

- I learnt to consider how others impact on my decisions.

As one lesson centred on emotional understanding, many students commented on their increased understanding of their emotional world.

- I learnt how I react to my feelings and how others react to their feelings.

- I learnt how I realise my feelings when I'm having them.

- I learnt that everyone reacts differently in different situations.

- I learnt that I'm a nice person.

Another major theme covered in the Personal Responsibility Program was social responsibility, the idea that the choices we make and the way we behave often affects others, and as such we should consider our impact on others when deciding how to live our lives. This idea elicited interesting feedback from the students.

- I learnt that rules are important as they impact on social relationships - they must enhance equality.

- I learnt that everyone has the right to a safe environment and a responsibility to provide one.

- I learnt that everyone holds responsibility together and we must look after one another as a community.

- I learnt about respect.

A number of students commented on their understanding of personal responsibility and considered how the construct could play a role in their lives.

- I learnt that I did not realise how many different responsibilities I had.

- I learnt that your life path is up to you and we can change our actions by taking responsibility.

- Something that challenged me is the idea that I can't blame anyone else for my decisions and that I am responsible for how my life turns out.

- I learnt that not everything is a right, and when you do have a right you have responsibilities, and these are harder to identify.

- I learnt that there is power in our rights and decisions and that if I use personal responsibility, my personal power will grow stronger.

The comments discussed above are positive and appear to show that the students reflected on what they were learning. Not only did students grapple with the ideas presented throughout the program, their comments highlight that they struggled to work these ideas into their own lives. Change can only come about when one examines new knowledge against one's current understandings (Doolittle & Camp,

1999). Students appear to have considered the place personal responsibility may have in their own lives. The construct was removed from an abstract ideal and became a workable idea that challenged and stimulated them.

As this study was the first time that the Personal Responsibility Program had been undertaken in a school, the students were asked to provide specific feedback about the program itself. These comments were overwhelmingly positive and include:

- This is really good, fun and made me think.

- The program is working well.

- This was an informative, rewarding and interesting lesson. I really enjoyed it.

- These lessons are very informative and highly beneficial.

- This lesson helped our class get to know each other better as I learnt about the views of other class members and it helped me realise why others have made their choices.

- The lesson gets you to think about who you are and I realised a bit more about myself.

- The whole lesson worked really well and hearing what others have to say is a great learning tool.

- This lesson was awesome.

- I learnt a lot. This lesson was the best.

- I have enjoyed doing this program.

- Thanks heaps for all your effort. It paid off.

- Thank you for several weeks of group work.

These comments are promising and demonstrate that the Personal Responsibility Program was deemed valuable, interesting and fun to the adolescents. The students learnt more about themselves and about their peers, and they learnt that it is valuable to connect with themselves and others. While the concepts that make up the program are beneficial for the students to know and understand (emotional intelligence, rights and responsibilities etc.), the idea that self-examination is worthy of time and energy is just as valuable an idea to impart to adolescents.

Teacher Feedback

The teachers commented on two main areas – the students' involvement in the program and how successfully the program was implemented. With regard to student involvement the teachers commented:

- The students largely appeared to agree that they do have control over their choices and actions and that they are responsible for their actions.

- The students provided thoughtful and sensible answers and wanted to discuss ideas that the teachers found surprising and impressive in their depth.

- The students were surprised to learn that they had a vast range of choices in any given situation.

- The teachers were surprised at how willingly the students would share their group responses with the rest of the class and engage in discussions.

- Students appeared easily able to identify their rights yet struggled to identify their responsibilities.

- The students were required to think during the program and they did appear to extend their thinking to grasp ideas and concepts.

- Most students gave the program a go and appeared to enjoy it.

- The students appeared to most enjoy the activities that were active and involved group work.

In relation to the success of the program's implementation the teachers noted:

- The program was well organised and relevant to the kids, and teaching it was enjoyable.

- As the program covered complex ideas and material it required adequate preparation time and teachers could not "fly by the seat of their pants." Having a fortnight between the lessons may have been too long to get a sense of continuity between each lesson.

- The timing of the lessons was occasionally a problem, as it was harder to get the students involved if the lesson was on the second last day of school or right near exam time.

- Five lessons were appropriate and the program would not benefit from being any longer.

- Teachers highlighted that the resources provided with the program (such as lesson plans, lesson scripts and handouts) made the program easy to teach in the classroom as it reflected the structure teachers follow when creating a lesson.

- The lessons progressed most successfully when the teachers shared information and examples from their own lives with the students.

The success of the program largely rested on the willingness of the teachers to learn about and teach the program. As the feedback from the teachers and students suggest, the teachers did an excellent job in diligently and creatively presenting the program.

Researcher's Reflections on Program Content and Design

Observations made by the researcher during the implementation process, and post-implementation after feedback from teachers and students, illuminated positives and negatives with regard to the content and design of the Personal Responsibility Program. In relation to the program's content, the majority of the activities were well received by the adolescents and appeared to generate appropriate engagement. It was noted however that large classroom discussions, designed to stimulate debate, tended to be received poorly. The adolescents appeared unwilling to share their individual ideas in the whole class environment. It appeared more effective to have the students discuss ideas in smaller groups and then have them report to the class the findings of these groups. The adolescents were very willing to share their "group" ideas. This increase in anonymity appears important when expecting adolescents to discuss complex and often personal ideas. Additionally, the use of role-play was met with resistance. This may have been partly due to the complicated instructions offered with this role-play, as a number of students commented on their feedback sheets that they had not completely understood how the role-play was supposed to work. Adolescents may have resisted the role-play for similar reasons that they resisted the whole class discussion. Adolescents appear consumed with saving face, and these two activities asked them to be

vulnerable. This appeared to be asking too much from these adolescents in this setting.

The students met the incorporation of popular culture, particularly the use of the Spiderman video segment, with enthusiasm. They appeared to engage with this video and most of them commented that they loved the movie and were looking forward to that bit of the program. Additionally, they embraced the Personality Quiz with a number of them commenting that they had heard about it previously on television (during Dr Phil – a daytime talk show). Many students commented on their feedback sheets that they thoroughly enjoyed the group work. A number of activities involved working in pairs or with small groups, and this was embraced readily by the students each lesson. The adolescents noted in their feedback sheets that this was a particularly useful learning tool as they got to hear the opinions of, and connect with, their classmates. In line with this, the students highlighted that they enjoyed hearing the personal stories of their teachers and the teachers commented that the students responded positively when they shared their viewpoints and experiences. It appears that connections were made between students and with students and teachers throughout the program's implementation.

The researcher observed, an observation supported by teacher reflections, that the students appeared to enjoy activities that involved them moving around the room. A number of activities required the adolescents to get out of their seats, and this appeared to suit them. The physical movement appeared to free up the students who engaged more in discussion with those around them and responded promptly to the teacher's/researcher's questions.

The design and implementation of the program did appear to cause a number of issues. Teachers commented that the fortnight spacing between classes was too long, and they found it hard to draw connections between the preceding lessons as they could hardly remember what had been covered. The teachers requested that an overview sheet be included that briefly stated the key points of each lesson and the links from lesson to lesson. This was created and included for the second implementation of the program.

The constructivist underpinning of the program required students to take ownership of the program and direct their own learning. In practice this was harder to achieve. This may have been partly due to the fact that the first lesson did not place enough emphasis on explaining this to students. Despite the fact that students are encouraged to engage in self-directed learning in Years 11 and 12 at the high school, they were reluctant to do so. The program would have benefited from explaining this expectation to students and justifying to them why this choice was made (Lea, Stephenson, & Troy, 2003).

The overwhelming feedback from adolescents and teachers was that the program was interesting, fun, valuable, enjoyable to implement and enjoyable to undertake. The feedback provided by students was thoughtful, indicating that they engaged meaningfully with the program. The decision to include feedback sheets for students was an excellent idea that yielded valuable data. As quantitative data can only provide a limited amount of information, the inclusion of qualitative data allowed a fuller picture to emerge. The feedback sheets for teachers were less

effective, with a minimal number being completed. However the teacher focus group conducted after the program's completion enabled their opinions and insights to be captured.

According to this feedback, the implementation of the Personal Responsibility Program was a success. The students provided promising feedback that highlighted their growth throughout the program. Feedback from the teachers supported the students' positive perceptions and acknowledged the teachers' enjoyment and positive feelings toward the program. The researcher noted that the students engaged with the material and each other, and were willing to be thoughtful and reflective. As many of the concepts discussed throughout the program are weighty issues that require continual thought and reassessment, it is hoped that the Personal Responsibility Program planted seeds in the minds of these students that will grow as they do. As Year 11 students, they are beginning to experience greater freedom and will need to make important life choices. It is hoped that when making these choices, they will use the skills they were encouraged to practice whilst undertaking the Personal Responsibility Program.

While the qualitative feedback analysed in this chapter offers support for the notion that the Personal Responsibility Program may lead to a change in adolescent thinking, Chapter 8 examines the results of the quantitative data collected using the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire (developed by researcher), the Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998) and the Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Would the promising findings reflected in the qualitative data be supported by the survey data?

CHAPTER 8: STUDY 3 EVALUATING THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

PROGRAM

As discussed in Chapter 7, the Personal Responsibility Program was created for use

in the current study. As such it had not been implemented before, and thus its

effectiveness as an intervention was undetermined. In order to evaluate the

program using scientifically tested and robust measures, students completed the

Personal Responsibility Questionnaire (developed by the researcher), the

Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998) and the Rosenberg (1965) Self-

Esteem Scale pre- and post-intervention. This chapter presents the results of this

research design. Additionally the relationships between personal responsibility,

emotional intelligence and self-esteem are examined. Study 3 addressed the

following research questions, *"Can a program aimed at enhancing the personal*

responsibility level of adolescents be taught in a high school and demonstrate

measurable effect?" and *"Is there a relationship between personal responsibility,*

emotional intelligence and self-esteem?"

Design

The design of Study 3 was pre-post questionnaire quasi-experimental intervention

in two parts. Data was collected at three points in time (Time 1, Time 2 and Time

3) and a Personal Responsibility Program intervention was incorporated at varying

points. The first part of the design involved the pre-testing (two weeks prior to the

intervention) via questionnaire of all participants measuring personal responsibility,

emotional intelligence and self-esteem (see Table 8.1). This testing allowed for a

baseline level on each variable for each student to be established, enabling

confirmation that the experimental and control were from the same population and

allowing later changes to be identified.

The Personal Responsibility Program intervention was first delivered to students in

the experimental group. This experimental/control group design allowed for a

comparison between those students who had and had not undertaken the program

in order to strengthen the proposition that any changes that may have occurred in

the experimental group could be attributed to the program's implementation. At

Time 2, students in the experimental and control groups completed the

questionnaires (see Table 8.1).

Table 8.1

*Timeline of Questionnaire Completion and Exposure to Intervention (Personal
Responsibility (PR) Program) for Experimental and Control groups*

	TIME 1 Questionnaires completed	*Intervention PR Program*	**TIME 2** Questionnaires completed	*Intervention PR Program*	**TIME 3** Questionnaires completed
	March 2005	April - June	July	July - Sept	October 2005
Experimental Group	✓	✓	✓		✓
Control Group	✓		✓	✓	✓

*Note: Time 2 questionnaires were completed two weeks after the experimental group completed the Personal Responsibility Program. Time 3 questionnaires were completed two weeks after the control group completed the Personal Responsibility Program.

The second part of the design involved the administration of questionnaires to students in the experimental and control groups at Time 2 (four months after Time 1). Students in the control group were given the Personal Responsibility Program intervention (see Table 8.1). At Time 3 the questionnaires were once again administered to all participants. Of note is that in this design the experimental group had previously received the intervention four months prior.

Participants

Initial sample recruitment. One hundred and ninety four Year 11 students from one public high school in the south-eastern part of Queensland, Australia were initially recruited for this study. These students were divided randomly by class into two groups by the high school prior to Time 1, with the experimental group comprising four of the seven Year 11 form classes and the control group comprising the remaining three Year 11 form classes.

Determining a useable sample. A main aim of this study was to determine any possible changes that may have occurred in the variables under consideration after the implementation of an intervention program. In the design of the study, students were to complete questionnaires at three points in time; however some students did not complete questionnaires on all occasions. As such, only students who had completed the questionnaires at two or three points in time were then considered, leaving 99 students. On closer analysis it was shown that some of these 99 students had data at two time points that did not offer useful information. For example, some students did not complete questionnaires at Time 1 and only

completed the questionnaires at the two points in time after completing the

Personal Responsibility Program. This meant that we could not determine their

baseline level of personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem,

and therefore the later information held no relevance. Additionally, some students

had data four months prior to undertaking the program and just after completing the

program, but no data just prior to undertaking the program. Again it was

impossible to establish whether the program had lead to any changes potentially

identified in their post program data, as the data collected prior to the program had

been too distant. It was decided that including students who did not have a

complete data set would jeopardise the integrity of the research and lead to

potential misinterpretations. Therefore, only students who had completed the

questionnaires at all points in time (Times 1, 2, and 3) were included in the final

sample. This left a total of 83 students.

Final sample. Eighty-three Year 11 students from one public high school in

the south-eastern part of Queensland, Australia participated in this study (F = 46, M

= 37). Of these participants, 61 (F = 38, M = 23) were allocated to the

experimental group and 22 (F = 8, M = 14) were allocated to the control group.

The age of participants ranged from 15 to 17 years with a mean age of 15.37 years.

Measures

The Personal Responsibility Questionnaire. The 30-item Personal

Responsibility Questionnaire was created from an earlier study in this research

program (see Chapter 6). This questionnaire comprises 30 items that measure

aspects of personal responsibility and uses a Likert scale for measurement with *1* being *strongly disagree* and *4* being *strongly agree*. A four-point scale was chosen as it created a forced choice for the participants (no neutral option) and was consistent with the other measures used. To generate a total score, the negatively worded items were reversed (items 1, 4, 6, 7, 12, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22, 25, 27, 30). Participants were asked to circle the response that appears true of them most of the time. Examples of items include, *"I can choose how I behave'* and *'I am usually willing to admit my mistakes"*. Psychometric analyses reported in Chapter 6 have shown the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire to consist of two factors, each with robust internal consistency. Factor 1 "Self control of emotion and thoughts" α = .87 and factor 2 "Self control of behaviour" α = .79. The 30-item Personal Responsibility Questionnaire can be found in Appendix J.

The Emotional Intelligence Scale. The Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998) is a 33-item questionnaire designed to measure an individual's current level of emotional intelligence by assessing their ability to monitor and discriminate among one's own and others' emotions. To generate a total score, the negatively worded item scores (items 5, 28, 33) were reversed and all items were then added together. Thus, a high score on this measure indicates a high level of emotional intelligence. Participants rate how appropriate each statement is to them on a four-point scale with 1 being strongly disagree to 4 being strongly agree. Example items include, *"Emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living"* and *"I am aware of my emotions as I experience them."* Schutte et al. (1998) reported internal consistency for this measure at α = .90 and a

two-week test-retest reliability of .78 (see Chapter 4 for further discussion on this measure). The Emotional Intelligence Scale can be found in Appendix M.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) is a 10-item questionnaire that provides a global measure of self worth. The questionnaire uses a Likert scale for measurement with *1* being *strongly agree* and *4* being *strongly disagree.* To generate a total score, the negatively worded item scores (items 3, 5, 8, 9, 10) were reversed and all items were then added together. Thus, a high score on this measure indicates a high level of self-esteem. Participants are asked to circle the response that appears true of them most of the time. Example items include, *"I feel that I have a number of good qualities"* and *"At times I think I am no good at all."* This scale has been found to have good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .86 (Ciarrochi et al., 2001) and one-week test-retest reliability of .82 (Fleming & Courtney, 1984) (see Chapter 4 for further information). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale can be found in Appendix N.

Student Feedback. Students were required to complete a feedback sheet at the end of each lesson (see Appendix K). This sheet was developed by the researcher and asked five open-ended questions focusing on the positives and negatives of the lesson completed and any learning the students felt had occurred. Questions included, *"Something new I learnt in today's lesson was…"* and *"Something that worked really well in today's lesson was…."* This data enabled further examination as to what impact the program may have had on student understanding about the constructs.

Procedure

Before entering the high school, ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant bodies and permission to enter the school and undertake the program was granted by the school Principal. Letters were sent home to parents (see Appendix O) explaining that the students would be participating in research examining aspects of personal responsibility and that this would require the completion of relevant questionnaires and involvement in an education program aimed at enhancing personal responsibility. Parents were asked to contact the Year Level Coordinator at the high school if they had any concerns or wished for their child not to participate. No parent chose to remove their child/ren. The three measures were given to the Year 11 students on three occasions (Times 1, 2 and 3) and the Personal Responsibility Program intervention implemented as explained in the study design.

Students were assembled in their form classes, handed the information sheet (see Appendix P) and asked to complete the measures. As these were completed in seven separate classrooms during form time, it was impossible for the researcher to address each class before they completed the instruments. Therefore, a script was written by the researcher that was read out by the teacher of each form class (see Appendix Q). As students were to complete the questionnaires at Times 1, 2, and 3, it was essential that student responses be tracked to reveal any changes that may occur over time. As such, an identification code was used which required the students to provide the first initial of their first and last name, and their birth date

and month (e.g., Amanda Mergler born on 7 March would have a code of A.M.0.7.0.3.). In this way the researcher was able to connect a student with their questionnaire responses over the three time frames and the students were able to remain anonymous. The script provided for teachers explained this to the students and advised that their participation was voluntary, confidential, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without comment or penalty. All students completed the questionnaires in class time and handed the questionnaire to the teacher before leaving the room. These were then handed to the year level coordinator who handed them to the researcher.

Personal Responsibility Program. The Personal Responsibility Program is based on social-constructivist notions of teaching and learning, meaning that the activities are largely student-driven, are relevant to the lives of adolescents, involve social interaction, and are active. The program, developed by the researcher, consists of five one-hour lessons delivered fortnightly within the classroom. Each fortnight a particular topic inherent in personal responsibility was examined, including choices and consequences, emotional awareness, rights and responsibilities and social responsibility. Students and teachers explore these issues using group work, video segments, role-plays and class discussions. At the end of each lesson students and teachers provided feedback on what they learnt and how the lesson progressed. For more information on the Personal Responsibility Program, see Chapter 7.

Initially the Year 11 form teachers who delivered the program were given a two-hour training session to help explain and clarify the program and its purpose.

These sessions were held two weeks before each implementation of the program with the appropriate teachers. Each teacher was provided with the full program that included lesson plans, lesson scripts and all extra resources needed (such as multiple copies of handouts and videos). For more information on the training of teachers see Chapter 7. The regular classroom teacher delivered each lesson. As a number of classes were experiencing the same lesson at the same time, it was not possible for the researcher to present to each class. However, the researcher taught each lesson to a different class, rotating through the classes during the term. It was originally conceived that the researcher would attend every form class during the length of the program, however teacher absenteeism required the researcher to go where there was the greatest need. This meant that during the first implementation (four form classes), the researcher taught two classes twice and one class once, however it was not possible to teach the remaining class.

The nature of the Personal Responsibility Program and a brief overview of the study were explained by the researcher to the Year 11 students during a year level assembly shortly before the Time 1 completion of the questionnaires. The program was implemented with the experimental group (N = 61) during Term 2 (April – June) of the school year, and with the control group (N = 22) during Term 3 (July – September). The classes were designed to run every fortnight for one-hour on the same day and at the same time. Due to timetabling restrictions however, this did not always occur. During the first implementation of the program, there was a three-week gap between Lessons 1 and 2. The remaining three lessons ran fortnightly as desired. During the second implementation of the program, the first two lessons ran as planned a fortnight apart. There was however an eight-week gap

until the third lesson, and this lesson comprised a combination of Lessons 3 and 4. Lesson 5 on social responsibility was removed altogether from this implementation of the program owing to timetabling constraints within the school. After completion of the initial intervention with the experimental group, the form teachers met with the researcher and provided feedback about the nature of the program, the perceived responses of students and the relevance of the program to an educational setting.

During the second implementation of the program, comprising those students in the control group, timetabling restrictions meant that only the first four of the five lessons could be taught (with Lessons 3 and 4 being taught together in one lesson), and each lesson was shortened from one-hour down to 45 minutes in length. As the last 10 minutes of each lesson was allocated to student and teacher feedback, this was removed. Again the researcher rotated throughout the classes during the three lessons. As there were only three form classes during this implementation, the researcher taught each class once. While it was hoped that a second feedback meeting would occur with those teachers who had been involved in the second implementation of the program, school timetabling made this impractical.

Results

Data Screening

Questionnaire item results were entered into three separate SPSS data files as Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3. Initial culling included deleting the results of students who had 40% or more of the items unanswered, and those questionnaires that were completed inaccurately. This inaccuracy was determined by questionnaires where obvious patterns were evident in the responses, such as answering 1 for question 1, 2 for question 2, 3 for question 3, 4 for question 4, and repeating this format throughout the entire questionnaire. The final number of individual students comprising these three files was 194. The code provided by students (comprising their initials and birth date) was used to allow the matching of student responses across time.

The initial 194 responses were analysed for any abnormalities in relation to missing data for Times 1, 2 and 3. The missing data were found to have no particular pattern, and were replaced in the data set by establishing the item mean for each item and inserting these in the place of the missing values (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). As each questionnaire had items that were negatively scored, it was necessary to recode these items (i.e., a *1 strongly disagree* became a *4 strongly agree* and a *2 disagree* became a *3 agree*) (Coakes & Steed, 2003). Once done, individual student responses to all items on each questionnaire were added to

generate whole scores for personal responsibility factor 1 and factor 2, emotional

intelligence and self-esteem. A new SPSS file was then created that contained the

subject code for each student, gender, age, condition (experimental or control) and

their total score for each construct at Times 1, 2, and 3. Participants with

incomplete data sets (scores at Times 1, 2 and 3) were deleted leaving a total of 83

participants (see "determining a usable sample" discussed previously in this

chapter).

Statistical Assumptions

Initially, extensive data screening of the Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3 data was

undertaken to detect problems with skewness and kurtosis. While some variables

showed slight skewness, transforming them did not improve the distribution and

therefore the original data was used (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995). No

transformations were required to meet the assumption of normality.

As Repeated Measures MANOVAs were used to analyse the data, key assumptions

underlying this test were examined. Data was screened for normality, linearity,

multicollinearity, singularity and outliers. These assumptions were met in all

cases. Equal variance-covariance matrices were observed using Box's M and

Levene's test and both were found to be violated.   As such, The Pillai's Trace

criterion was used to interpret results as it is a more robust statistic against

violations of assumptions (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Additionally, a bonferroni-

type adjustment was used whereby the alpha level of .05 was divided by the

number of tests (four) (Coakes & Steed, 2003). Thus the adjusted alpha level was .0125.

Research Question 3. Can a program aimed at enhancing the personal responsibility level of adolescents be taught in a high school and demonstrate measurable effect?

Quantitative Data

 Descriptive statistics. To examine whether the Personal Responsibility Program demonstrated measurable effect, basic descriptors of means, standard deviations and confidence intervals were examined (see Table 8.2).

Initial Independent sample t-tests were performed on the Time 1 data for each variable. This analysis served to demonstrate whether the experimental and control groups were drawn from the same population. The results of the t-tests revealed no significant differences on any variable, indicating that the groups were similarly composed and had been drawn from the same population. See Table 8.3 for means and standard deviations of each variable at Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3.

Table 8.2

Summary Statistics for Males and Females in the Experimental and Control Groups at Times 1, 2 and 3

	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP								CONTROL GROUP							
	Females N = 38				Males N = 23				Females N = 8				Males N = 14			
			95% Confidence Interval				95% Confidence Interval				95% Confidence Interval				95% Confidence Interval	
Variable and Time	Mean	SD	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Mean	SD	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Mean	SD	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Mean	SD	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
T1 EI	100.26	9.12	97.27	103.26	94.35	6.38	91.59	97.11	95.38	9.40	87.52	103.23	99.86	10.33	93.89	105.82
T2 EI	100.84	9.44	97.74	103.95	94.26	9.80	91.14	97.38	93.25	4.40	89.57	96.93	98.36	9.17	93.06	103.65
T3 EI	98.58	11.02	94.96	102.20	93.26	4.22	91.43	95.09	93.75	5.92	88.80	98.70	96.07	15.31	87.23	104.91
T1 SE	27.82	2.80	26.90	28.74	27.52	2.89	26.27	28.77	25.88	4.55	22.07	29.68	28.50	4.78	25.74	31.26
T2 SE	30.16	3.62	28.97	31.35	27.22	4.14	25.43	29.01	26.25	5.97	21.26	31.24	29.36	6.28	25.73	32.98
T3 SE	29.34	4.38	27.90	30.78	27.43	3.88	25.76	29.11	26.00	6.14	20.87	31.13	29.07	6.13	25.53	32.61
T1 PR F1	52.66	4.13	51.30	54.02	49.61	5.73	47.13	52.09	49.50	3.42	46.64	52.36	51.86	6.44	48.14	55.58
T2 PR F1	52.63	4.91	51.02	54.25	48.43	4.10	46.66	50.21	49.25	3.41	46.40	52.10	50.64	5.65	47.38	53.91
T3 PR F1	51.34	6.37	49.25	53.44	50.22	4.76	48.16	52.27	50.63	4.14	47.17	54.08	49.29	10.87	43.01	55.56
T1 PR F2	35.63	3.71	34.41	36.85	34.70	4.18	32.89	36.50	36.50	5.76	31.69	41.31	31.93	5.46	28.78	35.08
T2 PR F2	35.55	4.12	34.20	36.91	33.78	4.51	31.83	35.73	37.25	3.73	34.13	40.37	33.93	5.51	30.75	37.11
T3 PR F2	35.34	4.36	33.91	36.78	35.52	5.92	29.96	35.08	36.25	3.33	33.47	39.03	33.29	8.06	28.63	37.94

Note. *EI = Emotional Intelligence, SE = Self-Esteem, PRF1 = Personal Responsibility Factor 1, PRF2 = Personal Responsibility Factor 2*

Table 8.3

Means and Standard Deviations for the Experimental and Control Groups at Times 1, 2 and 3

	T1				T2				T3			
	EXP		CON		EXP		CON		EXP		CON	
	N = 61		N = 22		N = 61		N = 22		N = 61		N = 22	
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
EI	98.03	8.64	98.23	10.02	98.36	9.19	96.5	8.05	96.57	9.39	95.23	12.57
SE	27.7	2.81	27.55	4.77	29.05	4.06	28.23	6.22	28.62	4.27	27.95	6.18
PRF1	51.51	4.98	51	5.56	51.05	5.02	50.14	4.91	50.92	5.8	49.77	8.9
PRF2	35.28	3.89	33.6	5.88	34.89	4.32	35.14	5.11	34.28	5.15	34.36	6.79

Note. *EI = Emotional Intelligence, SE = Self-Esteem, PRF1 = Personal Responsibility Factor 1, PRF2 = Personal Responsibility Factor 2.*

Initial implementation of the Personal Responsibility Program (experimental group). A Repeated Measures MANOVA was used to analyse the data. MANOVA was chosen as it allows for the complexity of comparing a number of dependent variables (personal responsibility factor 1, personal responsibility factor 2, self-esteem and emotional intelligence) across time (Time 1 to 2) with separate gender analyses. As discussed previously, due to the design of the study, between Time 1 and 2 an intervention was given to the experimental group and not to the control group. A 2 (time) x 2 (experimental group and control group) x 2 (gender) repeated measures MANOVA was conducted. No significant effects were found, $F_{(4,76)}=.579$, *p*=ns, partial $\eta^2 = .030$.

Second implementation of the Personal Responsibility Program (control group). A Repeated Measures MANOVA was used to compare the dependent variables of personal responsibility factor 1, personal responsibility factor 2, self-esteem and emotional intelligence across time with separate gender analyses. At the start of the second implementation of the Personal Responsibility Program, students in the control group had been exposed to the Personal Responsibility and other questionnaires on two occasions, four months prior and two weeks prior to beginning the program, and those students in the experimental group had already received the intervention. Therefore this study examined the extended effects of the program. A 2 (time) x 2 (experimental and control groups) x 2 (gender) repeated measures MANOVA was conducted. No significant effects were found, $F(4,76)=1.145$, $p=$ns, partial $\eta2 =.057$.

Gender Issues. While no significant findings were obtained from the analyses undertaken, the data was explored for particular directions and trends. At Time 1, the experimental and control group data were combined and examined by gender to determine any differences between the variables before any intervention occurred. Findings showed that females scored higher than males on emotional intelligence (F = 99.41, SD = 9.25; M = 96.43, SD = 8.41), personal responsibility factor 1 (F = 52.11, SD = 4.16; M = 50.46, SD = 6.02) and personal responsibility factor 2 (F = 35.78, SD = 4.07; M = 33.65, SD = 4.83). Males scored slightly higher than females on self-esteem (F = 27.48, SD = 3.20; M = 27.89, SD = 3.69).

Time 3 data, also with groups combined, were examined to see if these directions held after all students had been exposed to the Personal Responsibility Program.

Consistent with the above results, females scored higher than males on emotional

intelligence (F = 97.74, SD = 10.43; M = 94.32, SD = 9.87), personal responsibility

factor 1 (F = 51.22, SD = 6.01; M = 49.86, SD = 7.53) and personal responsibility

factor 2 (F = 35.50, SD = 4.18; M = 32.81, SD = 6.71). In contrast to the Time 1

results, females at Time 3 scored higher on self-esteem than their male counterparts

(F = 28.76, SD = 4.83; M = 28.05, SD = 4.84). Examination of the male and

female mean scores highlights that between Times 1 and 3, the males mean score

on self-esteem increased by .16 (T1 = 27.89 - T3 = 28.05), while the female mean

score increased by 1.28 (T1 = 27.48 - T3 = 28.76). Thus while not significantly so,

the Personal Responsibility Program appears to have generated a greater increase in

self-esteem for females than males.

In examining the experimental group only in relation to gender, it was found that

females in this group demonstrated higher mean scores on all variables across all

times (Times 1, 2 and 3) than males in this group. Thus these females

demonstrated slightly higher levels of emotional intelligence, self-esteem and

personal responsibility factor 1 (self control of emotions and thoughts) and personal

responsibility factor 2 (self control of behaviour) than their male counterparts.

Interestingly, this trend was largely reversed for students in the control group. In

this group, the males scored slightly higher than the females on emotional

intelligence and self esteem at all times (Times 1, 2 and 3). The results for personal

responsibility were not as clear however. At Time 1 (four months before the

program's implementation) and Time 2 (just before the program's implementation)

males scored higher than females on personal responsibility factor 1 and lower than

females on personal responsibility factor 2 (self control of emotions and thoughts and self control of behaviour). At Time 3 males scored lower than females on personal responsibility factor 1 (self control of emotions and thoughts) and personal responsibility factor 2 (self control of behaviour).

Qualitative Data

The data trends discussed above demonstrate that movement occurred in mean scores on all variables. The personal responsibility mean scores in particular showed changes that were not consistent by group or gender and in some cases led to a decrease in the mean score. It is interesting to consider that exposure to the program may have made adolescents aware of their limited understanding of personal responsibility (and its components such as emotional awareness). As a result, they may have rated themselves more harshly when completing the questionnaires after completing the program. Aspects of the qualitative data obtained from the student feedback sheets highlighted their growing awareness of the construct and their uncertainty of its impact on their lives. The students commented:

- I learnt that I don't understand other people's emotions,
- I was challenged by thinking about how I would feel in certain situations,
- I was challenged to admit some things about myself that weren't great,
- I'm not sure whether I have the right to do things I thought I did.

These responses highlight that the adolescents are becoming aware of some of the flaws in their own thinking with respect to personal responsibility. They are starting to appreciate that they may not have all the answers and may need to do further reflection. This may have resulted in them rating themselves more poorly on the quantitative questionnaires as they begin to feel uncertain about their positions. As core beliefs and assumptions are often extremely difficult to change (Mahoney & Patterson, 1992), it is not surprising that the quantitative data did not reflect major significant changes. It is possible that a longer period of time between the program's implementation and the questionnaires completion may have generated different results.

The qualitative data did however provide evidence that learning and growth had taken place throughout the program's implementation. The following comments provide evidence of this.

- I learnt that my actions have consequences and I should consider these,
- I learnt that I have to be wise in my choices and think of the consequences as they are a major part of the decision-making,
- This lesson made me more aware of myself and other people.

Research Question 4. Does a relationship exist between personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem?

Previous research with adults has shown positive correlations between levels of self-esteem and levels of emotional intelligence ($r = .57$) (Schutte et al., 2002). Thus it is important to consider whether the same relationship among these

variables would be found with adolescents, and what relationship personal

responsibility demonstrates to both self-esteem and emotional intelligence in

adolescents. This knowledge allows for increased understanding as to the

relationships among these variables and adds to the understanding we have of

personal responsibility.

The strength of correlation was examined between personal responsibility factor 1

(self control of emotions and thoughts), personal responsibility factor 2 (self

control of behaviour), emotional intelligence and self-esteem. Data was combined

so that the analyses included all participants (females, males, experimental and

control groups, N = 83) at Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3.

A moderate positive relationship was found between emotional intelligence and

personal responsibility factor 1 (self-control of emotion and thoughts) at Time 1 (r

= .60, p = .01), Time 2 (r = .60, p = .01) and Time 3 (r = .72, p = .01). Thus those

who generated higher scores on emotional intelligence also tended to generate

higher scores in personal responsibility factor 1 (self-control of emotion and

thoughts). The relationship between emotional intelligence and personal

responsibility factor 2 (self-control of behaviour) was negligible at Time 1 (r = -

.01, p = ns) and weak at Time 2 (r = .20, p = ns) and Time 3 (r = .33, p = .01).

A weak positive relationship was found between self-esteem and personal

responsibility factor 1 (self-control of emotion and thoughts) at Time 1 (r = .20, p =

ns), Time 2 (r = .47, p = .01) and Time 3 (r = .41, p = .01) and between self-esteem

and personal responsibility factor 2 (self-control of behaviour) at Time 1 (r = .25, p

= .05), Time 2 (r = .30, p = .01) and Time 3 (r = .49, p = .01). Additionally, a weak positive relationship was found between emotional intelligence and self-esteem at Time 1 (r = .21, p = ns), Time 2 (r = .47, p = .01) and Time 3 (r = .43, p = .01).

Personal responsibility factor 1, self-control of emotion and thoughts, correlates positively with emotional intelligence. While a weaker relationship was found between personal responsibility and self-esteem, the relationship was still a positive one, indicating that although weak, those higher in self-esteem tended to be higher in personal responsibility. In relation to self-esteem and emotional intelligence, the current study found a weak positive relationship. The correlational data gathered from multiple testing provides further construct validity for the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire.

This chapter has quantitatively assessed the Personal Responsibility Program through the use of three measures. While no significant results were recorded, it is important to acknowledge the small sample sizes that were used for the analyses. Additionally, an analysis of the means shows that there was movement in the mean scores on a range of variables at different times, often in the direction desired. The qualitative feedback provided by the adolescents served to highlight that present positions were being examined and learning was taking place. Chapter 9 discusses the overall research program and findings presented in this dissertation and offers directions for future research in this area.

CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION

Research Program

The purpose of the current research program was multifaceted. It included an exploration of the psychological construct of personal responsibility in order to contribute to our understanding of the variable, development of a definition of personal responsibility, and development and validation of a measure of personal responsibility. Further, the research program encouraged adolescents to examine personal responsibility and its components in order to increase their awareness of their ability to make choices and accept the outcomes of these choices. It was perceived that exposure to the Personal Responsibility Program would encourage adolescents to reflect on their thought processes when making decisions that affect their own and others lives. An education program was created and evaluated. This program may serve as a resource for schools that want to educate their students on personal responsibility.

Research Questions and Findings

Four research questions guided the program of research. These were explored through three separate studies.

Study 1

Study 1 (focus groups) sought to define personal responsibility using the words, concepts and ideas of adolescents and teachers. The research question asked was, *"How do adolescents and teachers understand 'personal responsibility'?"* The use of focus groups provided key concepts and ideas around which to understand personal responsibility, allowing the construct to be defined within parameters largely provided by adolescents and teachers. The students highlighted that personal responsibility involved an internal judgement of one's own actions, and an awareness of, and ability to accept ownership for, one's thoughts and feelings, behaviours and the potential consequences from one's actions. Teachers largely agreed with these notions and added that personal responsibility involved consideration of others, self-control and self-management. These aspects of personal responsibility align themselves with the constructs of locus of control, personal agency, self-efficacy, self-regulation and emotional intelligence. The input from teachers also identified that taking personal responsibility is about more than looking after oneself, as it involves the deliberate consideration of how one's behaviour impacts on other people.

The students in the focus group commented that the behavioural choices they made often revolved around the potential consequences that would come from their parents. Largely, students highlighted doing the right thing so as to avoid parental punishment, without appearing to internalise their parents' reasoning. Similarly, the teachers spoke about students who arrived at school and "appeared" to be doing

the right thing, yet it was only to placate teachers and no real effort or learning was taking place. This level of moral reasoning aligns with Stage 1 of Kohlberg's (1976) levels of moral development – the punishment and obedience orientation. At this stage of moral reasoning, the individual is usually obedient and does what is right in order to avoid punishment or receive a reward, regardless of the actions meaning or value. This is not a desirable moral position for adolescents to be in, as they developmentally have the ability to critically reflect on their own and others' behaviour, and should therefore be making more sophisticated moral judgements (Kohlberg, 1981; Piaget, 1985). Of course, the limitations placed on adolescents by teachers and parents may add to their sense that they must be seen to conform and do what these authority figures believe is right in order to avoid negative consequences.

Adolescents did discuss their willingness to do the wrong thing if they felt their parents would be unaware of their doing so. One student talked about sleeping in and arriving at school late as no-one was home in the mornings and his tardiness was therefore unknown to his parents, while another talked about getting drunk at parties but leaving enough time to sober up before going home in order to avoid parental detection of the drinking. This type of moral reasoning appears to align with Stage 2 – the instrumental-relativist orientation of Kohlberg's (1976) stage model of moral development. At this stage the focus is on satisfying one's own needs and whatever meets one's needs is determined as the right course of action. These students appear to have decided that sleeping in and getting drunk are more important than being at school on time and respecting their parents' wishes. The cognitive efforts of these young people appear to be on avoiding parental

punishment as opposed to considering what may be the best course of action for them to take to enhance their own well being.

Other students demonstrated a more sophisticated conception of moral reasoning. One student discussed his decision to not walk the streets at night after his parents had asked him not to. He reasoned that his parents did not want him to enact that behaviour, and therefore he was not going to. This type of moral reasoning aligns itself with Kohlberg's (1976) Stage 3 – the "good boy-good girl" orientation. In this stage, the individual conforms to the behaviour expected from the dominant order (in this case the family). The individual is seeking approval through being nice and displaying the behaviour expected of them. While still heavily focused on the rules of parents, the adolescent appears to understand that he has made an agreement with his parents that needs to be respected. This adolescent has decided to be true to his word and take responsibility for his choices.

Kohlberg's (1976) Stage 4 of moral reasoning – the "law and order" orientation, was demonstrated by one female student who spoke about being caught and expelled from school for smoking. This student highlighted that her father was right to hold her 100% responsible for her actions as she had done the wrong thing and broken the rules. She went on to say that her punishment of having to attend a public school (which in her eyes was less prestigious than a private school) was a consequence of the poor choices she had made in deciding to break the rules expected of her at the private school. This student articulately described the considerations of the "law and order" orientation, which focus on maintaining the social order by upholding societal laws and showing respect for authority. She felt

that breaking the "laws" of her private school meant that she had disrespected herself and the organisation and deserved to be punished as a result. This student is demonstrating personal responsibility for her actions, however her frame of reference for her behaviour is centred heavily on society's rules and values as opposed to those she has generated on her own.

The final two stages of Kohlberg's (1976) model of moral development are Stage 5 – the social-contract, legalistic orientation and Stage 6 – the universal-ethical-principal orientation. These stages focus on upholding societal standards that have been decided upon by the whole society and that are able to change over time as societal thinking on issues changes. Additionally a respect for individual opinion and an awareness that individuals choose what is right and wrong based on varying factors is present. Universal principals of human rights and justice come into play and there is a realisation that determining what is right is situational. While Kohlberg felt that these stages appeared during adolescence, the current study did not find evidence of moral reasoning at these stages. The adolescents involved in the focus groups appeared to be heavily focused on their own desires and the power of authority figures.

Interestingly a number of gender differences were revealed in the focus group data. Males and females highlighted an inability to control different emotions, with boys indicating that they cannot control their anger but can control their sadness and girls suggesting the opposite. It may be that this finding reflects the fact that our emotional experiences are culturally contained, and that males and females demonstrate only the emotions that are deemed acceptable for them to express.

Studies on emotional intelligence tend to show that females rate themselves higher in emotional intelligence than males (Ciarrochi et al., 2001; Devi & Rayulu, 2005; Harrod & Scheer, 2005). This may be partly due to the fact that women are theorised to demonstrate greater emotional awareness than males (Horney, 1967). It would be interesting to separate out emotions and emotional responses along those that are acceptable for males and females and examine the emotional awareness and control of both separately. It may be that helping each gender understand the skills they use to feel competent in some emotional areas can be extrapolated to increase their mastery of other emotional states.

The female students in the all female focus group articulated the idea that it is valuable to take personal responsibility so as not to hurt others. These young women highlighted times in their lives when they had either been let down by a friend or let a friend down, and the pain on both sides that resulted from this behaviour. These girls felt concern that either they or their friends had been "worried, frightened and crying" and they realised that letting their friend down was uncaring and therefore undesirable behaviour. This finding coincides with the understanding of moral development offered by Gilligan (1977) that women focus heavily on the notion of care when making moral decisions. Gender differences in the moral reasoning of men and women have been highlighted in a number of studies (Bardige, 1988; Gilligan & Wiggins, 1988; Irlen & Dorr, 2002; Johnson, 1988).

The focus group data highlighted that adolescents are complex moral beings who are thoughtful about moral choices and weigh a range of competing desires and

expectations. As Piaget (1985) argued, adolescents are able to take the perspective of others, hypothesise, differentiate between what they believe and the beliefs of others, and consider their own thoughts. Additionally, the current study showed that adolescents are able to understand and exhibit personal responsibility, but may choose not to if doing so runs counter to their desires (such as sleeping in late instead of getting to school on time). The focus groups revealed that adolescents do desire greater independence, supporting Harvey and Retter's (2002) findings that adolescents desire greater freedom than younger children. As adolescents strive to create their own identity and determine their own rules, they appear to understand that they must demonstrate appropriate behaviour to be granted such independence (Hacker, 1994). Many students commented in the focus groups that they must be responsible and work within their parents' rules to achieve greater independence.

As the focus of personal responsibility is around making conscious choices and acting in ways that serve oneself and one's community, encouraging adolescents to reason at stages of more advanced moral development is desirable. The focus groups provided valuable information as to how personal responsibility was operating in the lives of adolescents and what factors may deter its occurrence. While it is acknowledged that the literature used to shape the definition and components of personal responsibility also guided the questions asked in the focus groups, the findings from the focus group data largely supported the definition of personal responsibility and the four components derived (see pages 66 and 67). This similarity meant that the initial conceptualisation of the variable was sound,

and the focus group data was used to inform the Personal Responsibility

Questionnaire and the Personal Responsibility Program.

Study 2

Study 2 involved the development and validation of a 30-item questionnaire to

assess levels of personal responsibility in adolescents. The research question asked

was, *"Can a quantitative questionnaire define and measure an adolescent's level of*

personal responsibility?" The questionnaire was created using literature on

adolescent, cognitive, and moral development (see Chapters 2 and 3), the student

and teacher focus group data (see Chapter 5) and quantitative measures of

constructs sharing similarities with personal responsibility (such as locus of control

and emotional intelligence – see Chapter 6). As personal responsibility had not

been widely studied, there was no quantitative measure available to measure the

construct in adolescents. Thus it was important to develop a measure and ensure it

was statistically robust for use with adolescents.

Initial analyses with a large number of Year 11 students revealed a 51-item

Personal Responsibility Questionnaire with two factors (factor 1 – self-control of

emotions and thoughts and factor 2 – self-control of behaviour). Subsequent

analyses with an additional sample of Year 11 students further refined the measure

to a 30-item questionnaire. These analyses provide support for a two-factor

measure of personal responsibility which has strong structural properties and strong

internal reliability and which is considered appropriate for use as a measure of

personal responsibility in adolescents.

Study 3

Study 3 centred on the creation, implementation and evaluation of a school-based intervention – the Personal Responsibility Program. This program was implemented in a high school and encouraged adolescents to consider their own personal responsibility. The Personal Responsibility Questionnaire (developed in Study 2) was used to determine whether the intervention contributed to changes in the adolescents' levels of personal responsibility. Additionally, the Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998) and Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) were used to assess changes in these constructs in adolescents. Qualitative data were also gathered from students and teachers to illuminate the impact of the personal responsibility program. The research questions asked were, *"Can a program aimed at enhancing the personal responsibility level of adolescents be taught in a high school and demonstrate measurable effect?"* and *"Is there a relationship between personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem?"*

The Personal Responsibility Program was taught successfully in one high school. While there were minor issues around consistent implementation (due to teacher absenteeism, staff turnover and reduced curriculum time), the program was taught to all Year 11 students. Feedback from the students highlighted that the program had been largely successful. Students noted learning about the different responsibilities they have, realising that they cannot blame others for their choices, realising the number of choices available to them in a given situation, realising the

importance of considering the consequences of their choices and learning more about themselves and what they believe. As adolescents desire greater freedom to direct their own lives (Harvey & Retter, 2002), curricula designed for this age group needs to incorporate important choices relevant to adolescents and an examination of individual choice (Doolittle & Camp, 1999).

The quantitative data gained through the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire (developed in Study 2), the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (Schutte et al., 1998) and the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale did not provide evidence of significant change in these variables over time. Due to student attrition however, the number of students included in the final analyses was small (N=83), and this number was further divided into the experimental (n=61) and control groups (n=22). As such, the data may not have provided sufficient power to establish significant differences that may have occurred (Aron & Aron, 2003). Additionally, the amount of time between pre- and post-testing for both groups was a maximum of four months. This may not have been long enough for change to occur in participants.

An examination of the mean scores of each variable at various times did show interesting trends within and between the groups. In line with previous research (Ciarrochi et al., 2001; Devi & Rayulu, 2005; Harrod & Scheer, 2005), females in the experimental group self-reported higher levels of emotional intelligence than males in this group at Time 1 (before undertaking the intervention), Time 2 (directly after completing the intervention) and at Time 3 (four months after completing the intervention). While past research on gender differences in self-

esteem is convoluted (Baldwin & Hoffmann, 2002; Dukes & Martinez, 1994; Thornberg & Jones, 1982), the current study revealed that females in the experimental group self-reported higher levels of self-esteem than males in this group at all three times. Additionally, females in the experimental group demonstrated higher mean scores on personal responsibility (factors 1 and 2) than males in this group at all three times.

As personal responsibility involves an emotional awareness and understanding, social empathy and behavioural control, it is not surprising that females tend to self-report higher levels of the construct. Many studies that have examined emotion-related constructs (such as emotional intelligence, empathy, and interpersonal relationships) have shown that females score higher than males (Devi & Rayulu, 2005; Harrod & Scheer, 2005; Lang-Takac & Osterweil, 1992). Interestingly however, many studies that have examined self-esteem tend to report males self-reporting higher levels of self-esteem than females (Chubb et al., 1997; Dukes & Martinez, 1994; Harper & Marshall, 1991). It may be that exposure to the Personal Responsibility Program enabled female participants in the experimental group to see all the ways in which they do take personal responsibility. This may in turn have led to feelings of increased self-esteem (Piltz, 1998).

Conversely, males in the control group self-reported higher levels of emotional intelligence and self-esteem at Time 2 (just before undertaking the program) and Time 3 (directly after completing the program). The results for personal responsibility were not as clear however. At Time 2 males scored higher than females on personal responsibility factor 1 (self control of emotions and thoughts)

and lower than females on personal responsibility factor 2 (self control of behaviour). At Time 3 males scored lower than females on personal responsibility factor 1 (self control of emotions and thoughts) and personal responsibility factor 2 (self control of behaviour).

It is interesting that the results from the control group largely run counter to the findings of the experimental group. While males scoring higher on self-esteem fits largely with past research (Bolognini et al., 1996; Chubb et al., 1997; Dukes & Martinez, 1994; Steitz & Owen, 1992), males scoring higher on emotional intelligence and personal responsibility factor 1 (self-control of emotions and thoughts) is intriguing. Additionally, the intervention appears to have reduced the males' sense of confidence in their level of personal responsibility around self-control of emotions and thoughts, yet not in their confidence in relation to emotional intelligence. It may be that exposure to the program made the male adolescents aware of the ways in which they do not take personal responsibility. This increased awareness of the role of personal responsibility in their lives may have led them to rate themselves harsher on this measure when undertaking the questionnaire after completing the program.

When the experimental and control groups were combined and examined by gender (which can only be done at Time 1 as this is the only stage at which both groups had not been exposed to the intervention), females scored higher than males on emotional intelligence and personal responsibility factors 1 and 2 (self-control of emotion and thoughts and self-control of behaviour) and marginally lower on self-esteem.

These quantitative findings show that some movement did occur in the mean scores for males and females in emotional intelligence, self-esteem and personal responsibility. For females in the experimental group, emotional intelligence and self-esteem rose slightly directly after the program's implementation, while personal responsibility factor 1 and 2 stayed the same. For males in the experimental group, emotional intelligence and self-esteem scores stayed the same directly after the program's implementation, while there was a very slight decrease in personal responsibility factor 1 and 2. For females in the control group, emotional intelligence increased slightly after the program's implementation, while scores on self-esteem, personal responsibility factor 1 and personal responsibility factor 2 decreased. For males in the control group, emotional intelligence, self-esteem and personal responsibility factor 1 scores increased after the program's implementation, while personal responsibility factor 2 scores decreased.

As personal responsibility is a newly developed construct that was thought to have commonalities with related constructs (such as those discussed in Chapter 2), the correlations between personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem were examined. As emotional intelligence and self-esteem are well-established constructs that have been used and validated in countless studies (Kaplan, 1980; Palmer et al., 2002; Petrides et al., 2004; Rosenberg, 1985; Rosenberg et al., 1989; Schutte et al., 1998), it was deemed valuable to examine the relationship between these measures and the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire. This was expected to provide greater information about the construct validity of the measure. As reported in Chapter 8, a moderate positive relationship was found between

emotional intelligence and personal responsibility factor 1 (self-control of emotions and thoughts), while the relationship between emotional intelligence and personal responsibility factor 2 (self-control of behaviour) was negligible. As emotional intelligence and personal responsibility factor 1 (self-control of emotions and thoughts) both focus on emotional awareness, understanding and control, it is meaningful to find the expected relationship between these two constructs. As expected, those higher in emotional intelligence also tended to be higher in personal responsibility factor 1 (self-control of emotions and thoughts).

A weak positive relationship was found between self-esteem and personal responsibility factor 1 (self-control of emotion and thoughts) and personal responsibility factor 2 (self-control of behaviour). This is perhaps not surprising. Self-esteem concerns itself with one's perception of oneself. If one is not good at something, but does not value being good at it, then one's self-esteem can remain high. Perhaps being personally responsible is not something adolescents link to their self-perception. As the focus group data highlighted, taking a personally responsible approach is often something students feel they need to do in order to get what they want and to avoid punishment. Therefore the weight behind personal responsibility may come from external players, and adolescents may not judge themselves according to their levels of personal responsibility.

Contributions of the Research Program

This research program has made substantial contributions to the literature. As personal responsibility is a highly discussed yet little examined construct, the present research program has provided a definition of the construct and enhanced our understanding of its role in the lives of adolescents. By creating a concise definition of personal responsibility, namely "the ability to identify and regulate one's own thoughts, feelings and behaviour, along with a willingness to hold oneself accountable for the choices made and the social and personal outcomes generated from these choices" and articulating the four components of personal responsibility, being (1) an awareness of, and control over, individual thoughts and feelings; (2) an awareness of, and control over, choices made regarding behaviour; (3) a willingness to be accountable for the behaviour enacted and the resulting outcome; and (4) an awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one's behaviour upon others, the research program has operationalised the construct for use in future studies.

The focus group process also highlighted the role of personal responsibility in adolescent development. It was shown that the construct could be understood and considered by adolescents due to the cognitive and moral sophistication that develops early in this developmental timeframe. Additionally, the focus group data highlighted that normal adolescent desires, such as increased freedom from parental control, are attached to personal responsibility, and that most adolescents appear to appreciate that being responsible will likely result in that which they desire.

Further, the focus group data supported the theoretically based definition and components of personal responsibility articulated in Chapter 2.

Study 2 generated a Personal Responsibility Questionnaire that can be used to assess personal responsibility in adolescents, filling a gap in the research literature. As we begin to examine the construct, it is essential that we have a statistically reliable measure to assess the level of personal responsibility adolescents possess. As societal commentators lament a lack of personal responsibility in society, particularly among adolescents, it is essential that we can robustly test these assumptions. The creation of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire allows us to advance in this area of research.

Study 3 has contributed a Personal Responsibility Education Program based on adolescent, cognitive and moral development literature (refer to Chapter 2), student and teacher focus group data (refer to Chapter 5) and an examination of other education programs (for a detailed explanation of the creation of the Personal Responsibility Program, see Chapter 7). Thus the program is based on sound theoretical and empirical data.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the Australian government has highlighted a need for Australian public schools to implement education that promotes student responsibility as "parents expect schools to help students understand and develop personal and social responsibilities" (MCEETYA, cited in Zbar et al., 2003, p. 10). The Values Education Study Final Report (Zbar et al., 2003) reported that many schools articulated a vast amount of goodwill within their schools and communities

toward adopting and promoting responsibility, respect and other values within formal education. All schools highlighted however that they were hampered in their attempts to deliver such education, as there was a relative lack of resources available that examined notions of personal and social responsibility.

The creation of the Personal Responsibility Program in the current study means that any high school in Australia (or indeed in the English speaking world) could implement this program in their school. The program was designed to be "teacher friendly", and thus includes lesson plans, all resources needed, and lesson scripts. As each lesson contains a feedback sheet for students and teachers, schools are able to gather qualitative feedback on the success of the programs' implementation. Additionally, the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire serves as a valuable way to quantitatively evaluate the program. As school administrators and teachers often express concern about the lack of personal responsibility in their students (Lickona, 1992), this program could be used to address this concern and put the issue of personal responsibility firmly on the agenda in high schools.

The Personal Responsibility Program can also be implemented more widely than in formal education. The notion of personal responsibility, and assisting people in understanding the role of the construct in their lives, is important in the areas of law, juvenile justice, social work, child safety and health. Encouraging adolescents to be aware of their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, and to take ownership of their choices and the consequences, are outcomes that are sought by many areas that engage with young people. This dissertation provides a thorough analysis of the role of personal responsibility in the lives of adolescents and a program focused

on educating young people on how to be more personally responsible. As such, the value of this research extends beyond formal education and the Personal Responsibility Program can be embraced in many areas as a practical way to assist young people to take control of their lives.

Methodological Contributions

The current study has also made a number of methodological contributions to the literature. Integrating focus group data with literature aided in the creation of the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire. Doing so allowed the measure to be based on sound reasoning that was supported by past research and current understandings of adolescents. This measure was then psychometrically validated, resulting in a 30-item questionnaire that can be used in future research examining personal responsibility.

Additionally, the Personal Responsibility Program was developed using literature, focus group data and other education programs that teach similar values. Utilising these sources enabled the creation of a program that was theoretically sound, relevant to adolescents and appropriate for implementation in schools. Using the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire to evaluate the program provided further validation for the measure and enabled sound empirical examination of the program's effect. The inclusion of qualitative feedback from students and teachers further strengthened the program and its ability to be evaluated.

The design of the current research program was a methodological strength. Using a mixed-method design (incorporating quantitative and qualitative data) allowed for an in-depth exploration of the personal responsibility construct that may not have occurred with just one method. The use of focus groups provided qualitative information that helped shape the quantitative measure. While the quantitative measure provided a numerical basis for examining whether the Personal Responsibility Program had impacted on student's levels of personal responsibility, the qualitative evaluation of the Personal Responsibility Program enabled student voices on the value of the program to be heard.

Utilising an experimental and control groups design was a methodological strength of Study 3. Doing so enabled any identified changes in the experimental group to be attributed to the program and not simply to developmental changes in adolescents. Additionally, the longitudinal aspect of the research program meant that changes could be examined over a longer period of time. If changes had occurred, this would have enabled an examination as to the longevity of these changes, strengthening the proposition that the program had made a lasting impact.

The extent of researcher involvement in the current research program provided further methodological strength. As focus groups were undertaken in two high schools and the Personal Responsibility Program was implemented in one high school, the researcher was closely involved with the adolescents. This generated a sense of mutual respect and understanding between the researcher and the students. As such, insights were offered by the adolescents, and gained by the researcher, that may not have been uncovered otherwise. Working closely with participants,

particularly when attempting to determine how their lives are impacted by a variable of interest, leads to richer and more fulfilling research (Patton, 1999).

Limitations

The current research program faced a number of limitations. The focus groups undertaken in Study 1 were comprised of predominantly white, middle class, female adolescents and teachers. As such, the results are not generalisable to differing populations. It may be that aspects of personal responsibility were not highlighted that may be weighted more heavily for different groups. The Personal Responsibility Questionnaire developed in Study 2 was partly generated from the focus group data, thus making it largely reflective of the viewpoints expressed by predominantly white, middle-class participants. Additionally, the questionnaire was tested on a similar population. As such, further testing of the questionnaire on other populations is required to determine whether the measure can be used more widely.

Study 3 was affected by the retention rate of participants. Research occurring in schools over time often faces problems with return access to the same students (Barry, 2005). As the current study involved the completion of all questionnaires on three separate occasions, it was impossible to ensure that all students were present on the testing days. While 194 students completed the first batch of questionnaires at Time 1, only 83 completed the questionnaires at all three points in time and therefore had valid data. This drastic drop in numbers resulted in decreased statistical power for the final analyses.

An additional limitation with Study 3 is that while a control and experimental group design was used, it was impossible to separate these two groups from each other during school time. As such, it is possible that the students discussed the program with each other and were exposed to concepts and ideas before undertaking the program, an unavoidable consequence of real world research.

As all students completed the same questionnaires at three points in time, it is possible that practice effects and boredom may have affected the results. In an effort to reduce this, the questionnaires were counterbalanced. The fact that self-report data was heavily relied upon does also present limitations, as this type of data is potentially subject to social desirability and other biases (McBurney, 1994). However, qualitative data was also obtained in an attempt to "flesh out" responses.

While the quantitative data did not reveal any changes in the variables under study over time, it may be that the time allowed to identify these changes was insufficient. Mahoney and Patterson (1992) highlighted that core beliefs and assumptions are often extremely difficult to change. While the qualitative data did show a shift beginning to occur in the adolescents' perceptions, it may be that adolescents need to sit much longer with the values-based information they received. Indeed one would hope that adolescents allow time for considered thought when determining what their values are and whether or not they take personal responsibility.

Future Studies

Personal responsibility is a new area of investigation, and as such there are many directions to be considered for future research. The current program took a global approach to personal responsibility, making the assumption that people will demonstrate similar levels of personal responsibility across a range of contexts. This of course may not be the case. Future studies could examine levels of personal responsibility in learning, relationships, and academic achievement and compare these findings. It is possible that a person may have high levels of personal responsibility in learning yet display low levels of personal responsibility in relationships. In order to assess for these different domains, future research may add to the current Personal Responsibility Questionnaire in order to create factors that examine these additional areas.

The present study used predominantly white middle class female students and teachers to define personal responsibility in the focus groups of Study 1. Future research could conduct focus groups with additional groups to further refine our understanding of the construct. Additionally, including parents in future focus groups may add considerably to our understanding of how personal responsibility impacts on adolescents, due to the role parents play in the socialisation of their children (Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998). This research may also help us understand the ways in which parents either encourage or deter their children from maturing into responsible adults. As the students and teachers in the focus groups highlighted parents as a valuable way in which children learn about personal responsibility, this is an important area for further study.

While the current study focused on Year 11 students (predominantly 15-16 years of age), future research could examine the levels of personal responsibility in younger children. It may be that aspects of personal responsibility develop much younger than conceived in the present study. Additionally, the personal responsibility levels of young and older adults could be examined. As personal responsibility has been conceived as a developmental construct, occurring alongside cognitive and moral sophistication, future research could examine whether the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire successfully discriminates between different ages.

The current study sought to examine the relationship between personal responsibility, emotional intelligence and self-esteem, and future research could extend this examination to include additional variables of interest. Aligning the Personal Responsibility Questionnaire with other well-established measures will determine whether the expected relationships are indeed found. It may be hypothesised for example that high levels of personal responsibility would correlate with an internal locus of control and low levels of depression and helplessness. Examining these potential relationships would shed light on the newly developing personal responsibility construct.

Finally, future studies would benefit from taking a longitudinal look at personal responsibility. Examining the construct in younger children and following these children through their adolescence and young adulthood would provide valuable information as to the developmental nature of the personal responsibility variable. Additionally, the application of the Personal Responsibility Program in a high

school with Year 8 students who are assessed before and after the intervention, and again every year until they reach Year 12, may highlight some benefits of the Personal Responsibility Program that the current research program did not.

Why Understanding Personal Responsibility is Important

When people take personal responsibility, they consider their choices and the potential impact of these choices before acting, lessening the chance that they will act foolishly and hurt themselves and others. This alone makes the study of the construct valuable. Encouraging the development of this construct in young people increases the likelihood that adolescents will make smart choices that benefit themselves and others. It is particularly important to develop this construct in adolescents as they are moving away from parental influence and beginning to make their own important and potentially life-altering decisions (Harvey & Retter, 2002). Therefore adolescents need to understand the responsibility they have in making their choices. If they appreciate that the decisions they make, and the resulting consequences, are their own and must be owned by them, they are more likely to consider carefully before jumping in. Additionally, young people are more likely to treat others in their society with respect if they appreciate that the decisions they make impact not only on their own lives but also on the lives of other people. This awareness of the interconnectedness of all people may lead to a greater sense of community among people.

Despite much public comment on personal responsibility, the construct had received little theoretical and empirical attention. Thus the present study fills a gap

in relation to defining, understanding and teaching the notion of personal responsibility. It is essential that schools encourage students to examine their personal and social responsibilities, as they must be prepared for the life choices they will soon be making. Providing adolescents with the opportunity to enhance their level of personal responsibility offers young people a better chance of avoiding life's pitfalls and embracing life's opportunities.

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FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Students

Scenario:
You are at a party and it is 11.30pm. You know that you have to be home by midnight or you will get in trouble with your parents. A good female friend of yours asks you to go for a walk with her and some other people that you don't know. You are aware that if you stay with your friend you will be home late. However, you do not wish to leave your friend alone with strangers. Therefore, you make the decision to stay with your friend and you do not contact your parents to let them know you'll be late. When you do arrive home, your parents are waiting and angry. After you explain what has happened they state that you have broken the rules and that you will be grounded for a month.

- In the above scenario, what choices have been made?
- How do you feel about your parent's reaction and how do you respond?
- How do you feel about the outcome (being grounded)?

1. What does personal responsibility mean to you?

2. If you broke personal responsibility down into its key parts, what would they be?

3. Can you think of an example where you really struggled to control your emotions and/or behaviour? What was happening for you at that time?

4. Do you believe you can control your emotions and behaviours?

5. If you feel that someone is holding themselves accountable for their choices and behaviour, what does that mean to you?

6. Do you hold yourself accountable for the choices you make, behaviours you enact, and the outcomes from these?

7. Do you believe it is important to take personal responsibility? Why, why not?

8. What in your life do you take personal responsibility for? What do you do that shows you that you are taking personal responsibility for those things?

9. Where/from who did you learn about personal responsibility?

Appendix B   Study 1 - Student information sheet
Study Title: "Personal Responsibility: The implementation and evaluation of a school-based personal responsibility program for year 11 students."

Faculty of Education
School of Professional & Learning Studies, QUT

Researchers
Chief Investigator: Amanda Mergler (Ph: 3864 3919)
Principal Supervisor: Professor Wendy Patton (Ph: 3864 3562)

The aim of this research is to develop, implement, and evaluate a personal responsibility program with year 11 students. The project is being conducted by Ms Amanda Mergler, who is conducting research for her Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD), under the supervision of Professor Wendy Patton from the Faculty of Education at QUT.

As a year 11 student you will be asked to participate in a focus group, with several other year 11 students, which will take about 45 minutes to complete. In order to generate discussion, Ms Amanda Mergler will ask a number of questions relating to personal responsibility. You are not obliged to answer or respond to all questions asked. However, the information will be of greater value if you do contribute to the majority of the discussion.

You will not be asked to provide any identifying information during the focus group. Only collective data will be published and all information provided by you will be anonymous and treated as strictly confidential. All records will be maintained in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to the researcher.

As you are under 18 years of age, your parents must sign the attached permission form indicating that you have their permission to participate in the focus group. Even with your parent's permission, participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without comment or penalty. Under no circumstance will you be prejudiced as a result of your actions; your participation or withdrawal of consent will not influence your relationship with QUT or the high school in any way.

At the beginning of the focus group you will be asked to state your first name and that you agree to participate in the study voluntarily. This information will be recorded by tape recorder, as will the entire focus group interview. You will be made aware of when the tape recorder is recording and when it is not. No identifying information will be recorded on any transcripts of the interviews.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this project, please telephone Amanda Mergler (Ph: 3864 3919) or Professor Wendy Patton (Ph: 3864 3562). You may also contact the Research Ethics Officer on 3864 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have any further concerns about the ethical conduct of this research.

Thank you for your participation in this project.

Appendix C   Study 1 – Parent and student consent form

Study Title: "Personal Responsibility: The implementation and evaluation of a school-based personal responsibility program for year 11 students."

Faculty of Education
School of Professional & Learning Studies, QUT

Researchers
Chief Investigator: Amanda Mergler (Ph: 3864 3919)
Principal Supervisor: Professor Wendy Patton (Ph: 3864 3562)

In line with research ethics protocols for studies involving minors, permission must be obtained from parents before commencing research. The purpose of this permission slip is to make explicit your willingness to allow your child to participate in the focus group on personal responsibility.

Statement of consent.

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information sheet about this project;
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction;
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team;
- Understand that you are providing permission for your child to participate in a focus group on personal responsibility,
- Understand that even with your permission to participate, your child is free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- Understand that you can contact the research team if you have any questions about the project, or the Research Ethics Officer on 3864 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- Agree to allow your child to participate in the project.

Name of parent _____

Name of child _____

Signature of parent _____

Signature of child _____

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Appendix D   Focus Group Questions – Teachers

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Teachers

1. What does personal responsibility mean to you?

2. If you broke personal responsibility down into its key components, what would they be?

3. Do you think self-control is an important part of personal responsibility? Why, why not?

4. Do you think accountability is an important part of personal responsibility? Why, why not?

5. Do you believe it is important to take personal responsibility? Why, why not?

6. How do you teach/demonstrate personal responsibility in your classroom?

7. How do adolescents demonstrate personal responsibility at school?

8. Do you think it is the responsibility of parents or teachers to teach personal responsibility to adolescents? Why?

Appendix E   100-item Personal Responsibility Questionnaire

Personal Responsibility Questionnaire

This questionnaire asks you about your responses to everyday happenings. Please circle the response that best fits with you on most occasions.

Demographic questions

Your age   _____
Year level _____
Gender   M   F

QUESTIONS	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
1. When making decisions, I decide for myself what is the best thing to do	1	2	3	4
2. I often lash out when I am all stirred up	1	2	3	4
3. There is usually a connection between how hard I study and the grades I get	1	2	3	4
4. I am mainly responsible for what happens to me	1	2	3	4
5. If an activity makes me feel stressed, I can calm myself down so that I can continue with the activity	1	2	3	4
6. I often do things without giving them enough thought	1	2	3	4
7. I am able to organise myself so that I have everything I need for school	1	2	3	4
8. Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me	1	2	3	4
9. I am aware of my emotions as I experience them	1	2	3	4
10. People who make me angry had better watch out	1	2	3	4
11. I often lose my temper and am unable to control my behaviour	1	2	3	4
12. When I experience a problem, I actively seek to resolve it	1	2	3	4
13. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough	1	2	3	4
14. I often think about what events are coming up and ensure I have everything I need to do well in these events	1	2	3	4
15. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals	1	2	3	4
16. Making choices doesn't get me anywhere because others decide for me anyway	1	2	3	4
17. Chance or luck does not usually play an important role in outcomes	1	2	3	4
18. People often make me feel emotions like anger or sadness	1	2	3	4

QUESTIONS	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
19. I am always getting in trouble for things that aren't my fault	1	2	3	4
20. How well I get on with others depends on how well I treat them	1	2	3	4
21. It is important to think before you act	1	2	3	4
22. When I am feeling emotions I don't like, I am able to change my thinking and make myself feel better	1	2	3	4
23. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work	1	2	3	4
24. Before I do something, I think about how it will affect the people around me	1	2	3	4
25. I am mainly responsible for my future	1	2	3	4
26. I have control over my emotions	1	2	3	4
27. I usually stay focused on my goal and don't allow anything to distract me from my plan of action	1	2	3	4
28. I try very hard not to hurt other people's feelings	1	2	3	4
29. People can depend on me to do the right thing most of the time	1	2	3	4
30. I can choose how I behave	1	2	3	4
31. To succeed at school, I believe you have to work hard	1	2	3	4
32. I often do things that are really not fair to people I don't care about	1	2	3	4
33. Many of the unhappy things that occur in people's lives are partly due to bad luck	1	2	3	4
34. I choose how to respond in situations	1	2	3	4
35. I want my actions to help other people	1	2	3	4
36. When it comes to my behaviour I have set guidelines that I expect myself to follow	1	2	3	4
37. I expect that I will do well on most things I try	1	2	3	4
38. If someone upsets me, it is not my fault if I am mean to them	1	2	3	4
39. Other people decide what happens to me	1	2	3	4
40. If I study hard, I will get better grades	1	2	3	4
41. When I'm angry I lose my temper and "let people have it"	1	2	3	4
42. I am a well organised person	1	2	3	4
43. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort	1	2	3	4
44. I sometimes become "wild and crazy" and do things other people may not like	1	2	3	4
45. I sometimes think I won't get what I really want	1	2	3	4
46. I treat others with respect because that is how I would like to be treated	1	2	3	4
47. I sometimes pick on people I don't like	1	2	3	4

QUESTIONS	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
48. I might as well give up because I can't make things better for myself	1	2	3	4
49. Friends can often talk me into doing things that I know may not be right	1	2	3	4
50. It is up to me to control my behaviour	1	2	3	4
51. I am usually willing to admit my mistakes	1	2	3	4
52. It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life	1	2	3	4
53. I believe if you try hard enough, there's usually a way to reach your goals	1	2	3	4
54. Doing well in school is a matter of luck and not choice	1	2	3	4
55. People's misfortunes often result from the mistakes they make	1	2	3	4
56. If I have said or done something that has hurt someone else, I am prepared to put things right	1	2	3	4
57. I can not control my behaviour	1	2	3	4
58. I believe it is usually best to cover up my mistakes	1	2	3	4
59. After reaching a goal I look for another, more challenging one.	1	2	3	4
60. I really care about how my actions might affect others	1	2	3	4
61. If I feel like it, I hit people	1	2	3	4
62. Many times I might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin	1	2	3	4
63. Sometimes I can't understand how teachers arrive at the grades they give	1	2	3	4
64. It is not my fault if I do not bring my equipment to school	1	2	3	4
65. I think about other people's feelings before I do something they might not like	1	2	3	4
66. Becoming a success is a matter of hard work	1	2	3	4
67. I think of the consequences of my actions before doing something	1	2	3	4
68. I don't plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad luck anyhow	1	2	3	4
69. Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking	1	2	3	4
70. I am aware of how my behaviour impacts on other people	1	2	3	4
71. If teachers put in more effort I would do better at school.	1	2	3	4
72. I have a responsibility to make the world a better place	1	2	3	4
73. I stop and think things through before I act	1	2	3	4

QUESTIONS	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
74. If I don't follow rules I expect to get into trouble	1	2	3	4
75. I make sure that doing what I want will not cause problems for other people	1	2	3	4
76. When I am mad, I yell at people	1	2	3	4
77. I would cheat on an exam if I knew no-one would find out	1	2	3	4
78. When I am angry or sad I can usually work out why	1	2	3	4
79. I do whatever I feel like doing	1	2	3	4
80. What happens to me is mainly my own doing	1	2	3	4
81. If I want to risk getting in trouble, that is my business and nobody else's	1	2	3	4
82. I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles	1	2	3	4
83. I don't owe the world anything	1	2	3	4
84. I have a whole bunch of thoughts and feelings that often distract me from what I am trying to do	1	2	3	4
85. I can plan ahead to make sure I have the equipment I need for school	1	2	3	4
86. In my case, getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck	1	2	3	4
87. Sometimes people make me so mad that I can't control my behaviour	1	2	3	4
88. To make a good decision it is important to think it through first	1	2	3	4
89. I have set goals and believe in working hard to meet them	1	2	3	4
90. I think about how my behaviour will impact on other people	1	2	3	4
91. I know why my emotions change	1	2	3	4
92. It is often difficult for me to stop thoughts that interfere with what I need to do	1	2	3	4
93. I am mainly responsible for my success in school	1	2	3	4
94. I often say the first thing that comes into my mind without really thinking about it	1	2	3	4
95. I believe if you work hard you will succeed	1	2	3	4
96. I can choose how I feel about things that happen to me	1	2	3	4
97. When I have done the wrong thing, I accept the punishment	1	2	3	4
98. It is my choice whether or not I do well in school	1	2	3	4
99. I control the choices I make	1	2	3	4
100. My emotions come out whenever they feel like it and there is little I can do about it	1	2	3	4

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix F   Study 2 – Parent information sheet
Study Title: "Personal Responsibility: The implementation and evaluation of a school-based personal responsibility program for year 11 students."

Faculty of Education
School of Learning & Professional Studies, QUT

Researchers
Chief Investigator: Amanda Mergler (Ph: 3864 3919)
Principal Supervisor: Professor Wendy Patton (Ph: 3864 3562)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

We live in a society where the individual is prioritised over the collective. Messages from the majority of sources advise us to look out for ourselves and succeed at all costs. This has an enormous impact on the interactions between people and the responsibility people take for their behaviour. The current project will examine the concept of personal responsibility – the idea that people hold themselves accountable for their choices, behaviour, and outcomes.

The aim of this research is to determine the usefulness of a questionnaire designed to assess an adolescent's level of personal responsibility. The project is being conducted by Ms Amanda Mergler, who is conducting research for her Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD), under the supervision of Professor Wendy Patton from the Faculty of Education at QUT.

Your child will be asked to complete a 45-minute questionnaire relating to personal responsibility. The questionnaire contains 100 questions and asks students to rate their answers on a four-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Your child will not provide any identifying information and only collective data will be published. All information provided will be anonymous, treated as strictly confidential, and maintained in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to the researcher. Participation in this research is voluntary and your child will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without comment or penalty. If your child chooses to withdraw, the school will provide an alternate activity during this timeframe. Under no circumstance will your child be prejudiced as a result of their actions; their participation or withdrawal of consent will not influence their relationship with QUT or the high school in any way.

As your child is under 18 years of age, ethical requirements determine that you must be aware of this research. If you feel that your child **should not** participate in this research, please write a signed note to [teachers/guidance counsellor's name] with your child's name, year and form class, and state that you do not wish for your child to participate. This note must be received by [teacher/guidance counsellor] no later than Wednesday the 23rd of February. This will ensure that your child is not included. The school will organise an alternate activity for your child. **If the school is not notified by this date, it will be assumed that you consent to your child's participation in this project.**

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this project, please contact Ms Amanda Mergler (Ph: 3864 3919) or Professor Wendy Patton (Ph: 3864 3562). You may also contact the Research Ethics Officer on 3864 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have any further concerns about the ethical conduct of this research.

Thank you for reading this information

Appendix G   Study 2 - Script for teachers

Script for Teachers when Overseeing Student Completion of the Questionnaire

I am now going to hand out the questionnaire that you are being asked to fill out today. This questionnaire looks at how you deal with everyday happenings. As soon as you get the questionnaire, please read the information sheet on the front. It is very important that you read this sheet as it tells you how to fill out the questionnaire. Do not turn to the questionnaire until you are told to do so.

Teacher to hand out the questionnaires and give students time to read the front letter.

Okay, now there are just a few things I need to say to you before you begin the questionnaire.
- This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in how you feel about things, so please be as honest as you can.
- You will not be identified through doing this questionnaire. There is no way that anyone will ever know what questionnaire is yours.
- If you feel strongly that you do not want to do this questionnaire, please raise your hand and I will direct you to do something else.
- The questionnaire may take up to 45 minutes to complete, although you may complete it earlier. Please take your time and it is important that you answer every question.
- You must do this questionnaire on your own.
- If you are unsure how to answer a question, put the answer that you think is most right for you.

The student from QUT who is conducting this research has asked me to pass on to you that she is very grateful for your time and effort in doing this questionnaire. She is using this information to help create a school program aimed at understanding how teenagers make decisions. Your help is very important in helping her understand how teenagers think and feel.

You may begin the questionnaire.

You can decide how you would like to collect the questionnaire. Students can either raise their hand when they are finished and the teacher can collect, or students could approach the teacher with their completed questionnaire, or all students could remain seated with their questionnaire until everyone has finished and they could be collected on mass. Please do whatever you feel most comfortable doing.

Before you collect the questionnaires from the students, please ask them to have a quick look over their questionnaire to ensure they have answered every question.

> *YEAR LEVEL CO-ORDINATORS AND TEACHERS - THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE. IT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED.*

Appendix H   Study 2 – Student information sheet
Study Title: "Personal Responsibility: The implementation and evaluation of a school-based personal responsibility program for year 11 students."

Faculty of Education
School of Professional & Learning Studies, QUT

Researchers
Chief Investigator: Amanda Mergler (Ph: 3864 3919)
Principal Supervisor: Professor Wendy Patton (Ph: 3864 3562)

The aim of this research is to develop, implement, and evaluate a personal responsibility program with high school students. The project is being conducted by Ms Amanda Mergler, who is conducting research for her Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD), under the supervision of Professor Wendy Patton from the Faculty of Education at QUT.

As a year 9, 10, 11 or year 12 student, you will be asked to complete the attached questionnaire examining aspects of personal responsibility. The questionnaire will take about 45 minutes to complete, although you may finish earlier or take longer. Please take the time to read each question carefully before giving your response.

Your answer should show the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. For example if the statement is, *I like school better than parties*, you would circle number *1* if you *strongly disagree* with that statement, number *2* if you *disagree*, number *3* if you *agree*, and number *4* if you *strongly agree*. If you are not sure, think about it for a moment and circle the answer you think is right for you.

You are not obliged to answer all the questions on the questionnaire. However, the information will be of greater value if you do answer every question. You will not be asked to provide any identifying information. Only collective data will be published and all answers provided by you will be anonymous and treated as strictly confidential. All records will be maintained in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to the researcher.

Participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without comment or penalty. If you do choose to withdraw, the school will provide an alternate activity during this time frame. Under no circumstance will you be prejudiced as a result of your actions; your participation or withdrawal of consent will not influence your relationship with QUT or the high school in any way. **By completing the questionnaire you are demonstrating your voluntary consent to participate in this study.**

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this project, please telephone Amanda Mergler (Ph: 3864 3919) or Professor Wendy Patton (Ph: 3864 3562). You may also contact the Research Ethics Officer on 3864 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have any further concerns about the ethical conduct of this research.

Thank you for your participation in this project

Appendix I   51-item Personal Responsibility Questionnaire

Personal Responsibility Questionnaire

This questionnaire asks you about your responses to everyday happenings. Please circle the response that best fits with you on **most** occasions.

<u>Demographic questions</u>

Your age _____   Year level _____   Gender   **M**   **F**

QUESTIONS	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
1. If someone is mean to me, it is not my fault if I am mean to them.	1	2	3	4
2. When I experience a problem, I actively seek to resolve it.	1	2	3	4
3. Before I do something, I think about how it will affect the people around me.	1	2	3	4
4. My emotions come out whenever they feel like it and there is little I can do about it.	1	2	3	4
5. I expect that I will do well on most things I try.	1	2	3	4
6. Becoming a success is a matter of hard work.	1	2	3	4
7. I often say the first thing that comes into my mind without really thinking about it.	1	2	3	4
8. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	1	2	3	4
9. I treat others with respect because that is how I would like to be treated	1	2	3	4
10. It is my choice whether or not I do well in school.	1	2	3	4
11. To make a good decision it is important to think it through first.	1	2	3	4
12. Sometimes people make me so mad that I can't control my behaviour.	1	2	3	4
13. When I am angry or sad I can usually work out why.	1	2	3	4
14. I have a whole bunch of thoughts and feelings that often distract me from what I am trying to do	1	2	3	4
15. I am mainly responsible for my future.	1	2	3	4
16. I think of the consequences of my actions before doing something.	1	2	3	4
17. I don't owe the world anything.	1	2	3	4
18. To succeed at school, I believe you have to work hard.	1	2	3	4
19. People can depend on me to do the right thing most of the time.	1	2	3	4
20. I might as well give up because I can't make things better for myself.	1	2	3	4
21. I do whatever I feel like doing.	1	2	3	4

QUESTIONS	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
22. I believe it is usually best to cover up my mistakes.	1	2	3	4
23. I make sure that doing what I want will not cause problems for other people.	1	2	3	4
24. I really care about how my actions might affect others.	1	2	3	4
25. When it comes to my behaviour I have set guidelines that I expect myself to follow.	1	2	3	4
26. I believe if you try hard enough, there's usually a way to reach your goals.	1	2	3	4
27. I sometimes become "wild and crazy" and do things other people may not like.	1	2	3	4
28. I am a well organised person.	1	2	3	4
29. I can choose how I behave.	1	2	3	4
30. If I want to risk getting in trouble, that is my business and nobody else's.	1	2	3	4
31. It is important to think before you act.	1	2	3	4
32. I have control over my emotions.	1	2	3	4
33. I usually stay focused on my goal and don't allow anything to distract me from my plan of action.	1	2	3	4
34. When I am mad, I yell at people.	1	2	3	4
35. I want my actions to help other people.	1	2	3	4
36. If I have said or done something that has hurt someone else, I am prepared to put things right.	1	2	3	4
37. I am usually willing to admit my mistakes.	1	2	3	4
38. I can not control my behaviour.	1	2	3	4
39. I believe if you work hard you will succeed.	1	2	3	4
40. After reaching a goal I look for another, more challenging one.	1	2	3	4
41. I stop and think things through before I act.	1	2	3	4
42. I am aware of how my behaviour impacts on other people.	1	2	3	4
43. It is not my fault if I do not bring my equipment to school.	1	2	3	4
44. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	1	2	3	4
45. I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles.	1	2	3	4
46. When I have done the wrong thing, I accept the punishment.	1	2	3	4
47. I sometimes pick on people I don't like.	1	2	3	4
48. I am mainly responsible for my success in school.	1	2	3	4
49. I have set goals and believe in working hard to meet them.	1	2	3	4
50. I control the choices I make.	1	2	3	4
51. I can plan ahead to make sure I have the equipment I need for school.	1	2	3	4

Appendix J   30-item Personal Responsibility Questionnaire

Personal Responsibility Questionnaire

This questionnaire asks you about your responses to everyday happenings. Please circle the response that best fits with you on **most** occasions.

<u>Demographic questions</u>

Your age _____   Year level _____   Gender   **M**   **F**

QUESTIONS	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
1. If someone is mean to me, it is not my fault if I am mean to them.	1	2	3	4
2. When I experience a problem, I actively seek to resolve it.	1	2	3	4
3. My emotions come out whenever they feel like it and there is little I can do about it.	1	2	3	4
4. I expect that I will do well on most things I try.	1	2	3	4
5. I often say the first thing that comes into my mind without really thinking about it.	1	2	3	4
6. It is my choice whether or not I do well in school.	1	2	3	4
7. To make a good decision it is important to think it through first.	1	2	3	4
8. Sometimes people make me so mad that I can't control my behaviour.	1	2	3	4
9. When I am angry or sad I can usually work out why.	1	2	3	4
10. I have a whole bunch of thoughts and feelings that often distract me from what I am trying to do.	1	2	3	4
11. I am mainly responsible for my future.	1	2	3	4
12. People can depend on me to do the right thing most of the time.	1	2	3	4
13. I might as well give up because I can't make things better for myself.	1	2	3	4
14. I believe it is usually best to cover up my mistakes.	1	2	3	4
15. I make sure that doing what I want will not cause problems for other people.	1	2	3	4
16. I really care about how my actions might affect others.	1	2	3	4
17. I sometimes become "wild and crazy" and do things other people may not like.	1	2	3	4

QUESTIONS	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
18. I am a well organised person.	1	2	3	4
19. I can choose how I behave.	1	2	3	4
20. If I want to risk getting in trouble that is my business and nobody else's.	1	2	3	4
21. I usually stay focused on my goal and don't allow anything to distract me from my plan of action.	1	2	3	4
22. When I am mad I yell at people.	1	2	3	4
23. I want my actions to help other people.	1	2	3	4
24. I am usually willing to admit my mistakes.	1	2	3	4
25. I cannot control my behaviour.	1	2	3	4
26. I am aware of how my behaviour impacts on other people.	1	2	3	4
27. It is not my fault if I do not bring my equipment to school.	1	2	3	4
28. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	1	2	3	4
29. I sometimes pick on people I don't like.	1	2	3	4
30. I can plan ahead to make sure I have the equipment I need for school.	1	2	3	4

Appendix K   Study 3 - Student feedback sheets

My Thoughts and Reflections on Today

TODAY'S DATE IS _____/_____/_2005__

1. Something new I learnt in the lesson today was

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Something that challenged me during today's lesson was

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Something that worked really well in today's lesson was

_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Something that did not work well in today's lesson was

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Other things I want to say are

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

PLEASE CHECK THAT YOU HAVE WRITTEN TODAY'S DATE ON THIS SHEET

PLEASE HAND THIS SHEET TO YOUR TEACHER BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Appendix L   Study 3 - Teacher feedback sheets

Teacher feedback sheet

Lesson no. _____

Things that worked well today

_____
_____
_____
_____

Things that did not work well today

_____
_____
_____
_____

Interesting comments made by students

_____
_____
_____
_____

Some examples students gave during the activities

_____
_____
_____
_____

Other things of note

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix M   Emotional Intelligence Scale

Emotional Intelligence Scale

This questionnaire measures emotional understanding. Please circle the response that best fits with you on **most** occasions.

QUESTIONS	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
1. I know when to speak about my personal problems to others.	1	2	3	4
2. When I am faced with obstacles, I remember times I faced similar obstacles and overcame them.	1	2	3	4
3. I expect that I will do well on most things I try.	1	2	3	4
4. Other people find it easy to confide in me.	1	2	3	4
5. I find it hard to understand the non-verbal messages of other people.	1	2	3	4
6. Some of the major events of my life had led me to re-evaluate what is important and not important.	1	2	3	4
7. When my mood changes, I see new possibilities.	1	2	3	4
8. Emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living.	1	2	3	4
9. I am aware of my emotions as I experience them.	1	2	3	4
10. I expect good things to happen.	1	2	3	4
11. I like to share my emotions with others.	1	2	3	4
12. When I experience a positive emotion, I know how to make it last.	1	2	3	4
13. I arrange events others enjoy.	1	2	3	4
14. I seek out activities that make me happy.	1	2	3	4
15. I am aware of the non-verbal messages I send to others.	1	2	3	4
16. I present myself in a way that makes a good impression on others.	1	2	3	4
17. When I am in a positive mood, solving problems is easy for me.	1	2	3	4
18. By looking at their facial expressions, I recognize the emotions people are experiencing.	1	2	3	4
19. I know why my emotions change.	1	2	3	4
20. When I am in a positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas.	1	2	3	4
21. I have control over my emotions.	1	2	3	4
22. I easily recognise my emotions as I experience them.	1	2	3	4
23. I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome to tasks I take on.	1	2	3	4
24. I compliment others when they have done something well.	1	2	3	4

QUESTIONS	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
25. I am aware of the non-verbal messages other people send.	1	2	3	4
26. When another person tells me about an important event in his or her life, I almost feel as though I have experienced this event myself.	1	2	3	4
27. When I feel a change in emotions, I tend to come up with new ideas.	1	2	3	4
28. When I am faced with a challenge, I give up because I believe I will fail.	1	2	3	4
29. I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them.	1	2	3	4
30. I help other people feel better when they are down.	1	2	3	4
31. I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles.	1	2	3	4
32. I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice.	1	2	3	4
33. It is difficult for me to understand why people feel the way they do.	1	2	3	4

Schutte et al. (1998). Development and validation of a measure of emotional intelligence. *Personality and Individual Differences, 25,* 167-177.

Appendix N   Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

These items ask you to respond to how you feel about yourself and others. Please circle the response that best fits with you on **most** occasions.

QUESTIONS	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others	1	2	3	4
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities	1	2	3	4
3. All in all I am inclined to feel that I am a failure	1	2	3	4
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4
6. I take a positive attitude towards myself.	1	2	3	4
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4
9. I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4
10. At times I think I am no good at all.	1	2	3	4

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Appendix O   Study 3 – Parent information sheet

Study Title: "Personal Responsibility: The implementation and evaluation of a school-based personal responsibility program for Year 11 students."

Faculty of Education
School of Professional & Learning Studies, QUT

Researchers
Chief Investigator: Ms Amanda Mergler (Ph: 3864 3919)
Principal Supervisor: Professor Wendy Patton (Ph: 3864 3562)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

We live in a society where the individual is prioritised over the collective. Messages from the majority of sources advise us to look out for ourselves and succeed at all costs. This has an enormous impact on the interactions between people and the responsibility people take for their behaviour. The current project will examine the concept of personal responsibility – the idea that people hold themselves accountable for their choices, behaviour, and outcomes.

The aim of this research is to develop, implement, and evaluate a personal responsibility program with year 11 students. The project is being conducted by Ms Amanda Mergler, who is conducting research for her Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD), under the supervision of Professor Wendy Patton from the Faculty of Education at QUT.

Your child will be asked to participate in a personal responsibility program. This will involve five one-hour sessions, run over a school term period. The program will be presented by teachers at your child's school and will occur during their […] sessions. Before and after the program, your child will be required to fill in a 45-minute questionnaire which asks them to rate from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* statements relating to personal responsibility. This means that your child will complete the same questionnaire twice.

Your child will be asked to provide their name and an identifying code on the questionnaire. Once both questionnaires have been completed, the code will be used to identify questionnaires belonging to the same student, and the child's name will be deleted. In this way, your child will no longer be identifiable from the questionnaire responses. Only collective data will be published and all information provided by your child will be treated as strictly confidential. All records will be maintained in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to the researcher.

Participation in this research is voluntary and your child is free to withdraw from the classes at any time without comment or penalty, even after your consent has been given. In these cases, the school will provide an alternate activity for your

child. Under no circumstance will you or your child be prejudiced as a result of your actions; your participation or withdrawal of consent will not influence your own or your child's relationship with QUT or the high school in any way.

If you do not wish your child to participate in the personal responsibility program, you must write a signed note to [Year level coordinator] stating your child's name, year and form class, and that you do not wish them to participate in the personal responsibility program. If [Year level coordinator] does not hear from you by Wednesday the 9th of March 2005, it will be assumed that you have given your voluntary consent for your child to participate in this study.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this project, please telephone Amanda Mergler (Ph: 3864 3919) or Professor Wendy Patton (Ph: 3864 3562). You may also contact the Research Ethics Officer on 3864 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have any further concerns about the ethical conduct of this research.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information

Appendix P   Study 3 – Student information sheet

Study Title: "Personal Responsibility: The implementation and evaluation of a school-based personal responsibility program for year 11 students."

Faculty of Education
School of Professional & Learning Studies, QUT

Researchers
Chief Investigator: Ms Amanda Mergler (Ph: 3864 3919)
Principal Supervisor: Professor Wendy Patton (Ph: 3864 3562)

We live in a society where the individual is prioritised over the collective. Messages from the majority of sources advise us to look out for ourselves and succeed at all costs. This has an enormous impact on the interactions between people and the responsibility people take for their behaviour. The current project will examine the concept of personal responsibility – the idea that people hold themselves accountable for their choices, behaviour, and outcomes.

The aim of this research is to develop, implement, and evaluate a personal responsibility program with year 11 students. The project is being conducted by Ms Amanda Mergler, who is conducting research for her Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD), under the supervision of Professor Wendy Patton from the Faculty of Education at QUT.

You will be asked to participate in a personal responsibility program. This will involve five one-hour sessions, run over a 12-week period. The program will be presented by teachers at your school and will occur during […] sessions. Before you begin the program, and once again when the program is finished, you will be required to fill in a 45-minute questionnaire which asks you to rate from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* statements relating to personal responsibility. This means that you will complete the same questionnaire twice.

You will be asked to provide an identifying code on the questionnaire. Once both questionnaires have been completed, the code will be used to identify questionnaires belonging to the same student. In this way, you will not be identifiable from the questionnaire responses. Only collective data will be published and all information provided by you will be treated as strictly confidential. All records will be maintained in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to the researcher.

Participation in completing this questionnaire is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without comment or penalty. You are being asked to complete the questionnaire as this will be the main way in which the personal responsibility program will be evaluated by the researcher. If you choose to withdraw, the school will provide alternate arrangements for you. Under no circumstance will you be prejudiced as a result of your actions; your participation or withdrawal of consent will not influence your relationship with QUT or the high

school in any way. **Completing the attached questionnaire will be deemed your voluntary consent to participate in this research.** As the school is undertaking the personal responsibility program as part of their […] sessions, you are expected to complete this program unless your parents have provided a signed note to [Year level coordinator].

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this project, please telephone Ms Amanda Mergler (Ph: 3864 3919) or Professor Wendy Patton (Ph: 3864 3562). You may also contact the Research Ethics Officer on 3864 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have any further concerns about the ethical conduct of this research.

Thank you for your participation in this project

Appendix Q   Study 3 – Script for teachers

Script for Teachers when Overseeing Student Completion of the Questionnaire

Please read to your form class before they begin the questionnaire.

Teacher - I am now going to hand out the questionnaire that you are being asked to fill out today. This questionnaire looks at how you deal with everyday happenings. As soon as you get the questionnaire, please read the information sheet on the front. It is very important that you read this sheet as it tells you how to fill out the questionnaire.

Teacher to hand out the questionnaires and give students time to read the front letter.

Teacher - Now I would like you to turn to page two of this questionnaire. This page asks you to provide a code, your age, year level, and gender. Please be aware that a code is being used as the researcher needs to keep track of the questionnaires. By using a code and not your name, you are able to remain anonymous. Please read this page now and answer the questions.

 Teacher to give the students time to read this page and answer the questions.

Teacher - Okay, now there are just a few things I need to say to you before you begin the questionnaire.

- This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in how you feel about things, so please be as honest as you can.
- You will not be identified through doing this questionnaire. There is no way that anyone will ever know what questionnaire is yours.
- If you feel strongly that you do not want to do this questionnaire, please raise your hand and I will direct you to do something else.
- The questionnaire may take up to 45 minutes to complete, although you may complete it earlier. Please take your time and it is important that you answer every question.
- You must do this questionnaire on your own.
- If you are unsure how to answer a question, put the answer that you think is most right for you.

The student from QUT who is conducting this research is very grateful for your time and effort in doing this questionnaire. Your help is very important in helping her understand how teenagers think and feel. You may begin the questionnaire.

You can decide how you would like to collect the questionnaires. However, once you have collected all the questionnaires for your form class, it is fundamentally important that you bundle them together with a rubber band and write your name and your form class somewhere obvious (either on the questionnaire on top or slip in a piece of paper with this information on it). I must be able to identify which questionnaires belong to each form class.

Appendix R   Personal Responsibility Program Lesson Plans

LESSON PLAN 1 – Overview of Personal Responsibility program

MAIN IDEA	EVALUATION
What does personal responsibility mean to you and how is it relevant to your life? **OBJECTIVES** The student is able to: • Understand the framework of the program. • Discover what they currently believe on issues surrounding personal responsibility. • Consider what they are currently responsible for.	• Listen to the students' discussions throughout the lesson. • Have students complete the 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet at the end of the lesson.

ACTIVITIES WITH TIME FRAME

A) **10 minutes** – Hand out 'Overview of PR program'. Teacher has one of these as an OHT also. Go through length of program, what topics are each week, feedback expectation. Explain there will be different types of activities such as working in pairs and small groups, class discussions, role-plays, and watching videos. Explain that all students are expected to contribute through respectful sharing in class. Explain that some terms may be difficult for students to understand and will be defined as they appear, however students should always ask if they are unsure of the meaning.

B) **20 minutes** - On the floor out the front of the classroom are placed the words Agree, Sometimes Agree, and Disagree. The words are separated by one metre each. The teacher reads out a list of statements one statement at a time and the students decide whether they agree, sometimes agree, or disagree by moving to that position after each statement is read. Students then discuss with others in the same position why they chose that position. Students are to be told that they have 30 seconds to decide what position they are going to take and to move there, and then have one minute to discuss why they chose that position with the others who also chose that position.

30 MINUTES

C) **5 minutes** – Students are to return to their desks. Teacher to ask students how they would define personal responsibility? Then put up on OHT which has a definition of personal responsibility. Break definition down and ensure student understanding.

D) **5 minutes** - Step 1: Teachers hand out the 'My list of responsibilities' activity sheet. Individually, students write down answers to the following: What responsibilities do you believe you personally have for: 1) yourself, 2) your family, 3) your community, 4) the world?

10 minutes - Step 2: Students are then to pair up with the person sitting next to them and compare and discuss their answers. They are to turn their activities sheet over and answer the questions on the back. These questions are: Are your own and your partners responsibilities the same? If not, what makes them different? With this question will be some areas to consider when answering this question, such as – your family, your place in your family, your values, your goals, your view of yourself/the world?

50 MINUTES

Essential closing activity

E) **10 minutes -** Students are asked to consider the lesson they have just had and provide feedback about it. Teacher comments that names are not required and students are to feel free to be honest in their comments. The teacher hands out the 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet. The questions are: 1. Something new I learnt in the lesson today was __, 2. Something that challenged me during today's lesson was __, 3. Something that worked really well in today's lesson was __, 4. Something that did not work well in today's lesson was __, 5. Other things I want to say are __. Teachers are to collect these sheets at the end of the lesson.

RESOURCES NEEDED
• Sheet with flowchart of the program by week (one for each student).
• OHT with flowchart of the program by week (for teacher).
• Sheet of statements for Activity B (for teacher).
• OHT with definition of personal responsibility for Activity C (for teacher).
• 'My list of responsibilities' sheet for Activity D (one for each student).
• 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet for Activity E (one for each student).

LESSON PLAN 2 – Choices and Consequences

MAIN IDEA	EVALUATION
That we actively make our own choices and those choices lead to consequences. By choosing our choices, we choose our consequences. OBJECTIVES The student is able to: - List different choices and their consequences. - Appreciate the connection between choices and consequences. - Apply this information to their own lives.	- Listen to the students' discussions throughout the lesson. - Have students complete the 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet at the end of the lesson. - Examples provided in Activity C can show student understanding of lesson.

ACTIVITIES WITH TIME FRAME

A) **15 minutes -** In small groups, students read through and discuss the following situation given to them by the teacher. "You are a young actor. You have been offered a movie role that will make you famous and wealthy. There are some things you are not quite comfortable doing, however. The director says that if you want the role, you must do anything and everything you are requested to do, like it or not. He also reminds you that there are plenty of others waiting to take the part and have their chance at fame and future". On the handout, the following questions are listed: What choices are available to you? Draw up a list of all your choices. Write down the possible consequences next to each choice. As a group, make a decision about what choice you will take and justify why you have chosen that choice. Teacher to walk around room while students are working and listen to what they are doing and how they are making decisions. After 10 minutes teacher can ask – how did you arrive at your decision? Does everyone in your group agree? Do you think it is important to consider the consequences before you make a choice?

B) **10 minutes –** <u>Step 1</u>: Students are to get into groups of three (any leftover students can form groups of four). Students are given the following role-play scenario: "You have just won two tickets to a concert of your favourite band. You have two best friends who also love the band and both want to come, but you can only take one of them. What are you going to do?" In each group, each student gets a piece of paper that tells them their position in this situation. For example, one student will have to decide between his/her two friends, another student can only go if his/her parents pick them up half an hour before the concert ends, and the last student can only go if he/she takes his/her little brother/sister along with him/her.

10 minutes - <u>Step 2:</u> After 7 minutes, teacher to advise students to make a decision if they haven't already and move on to the discussion questions. All these questions will be listed on their role-play scenario sheet. Students are to discuss how they feel about the decision, trying to make the decision, trying to get their way, and what consequences could result from the decision made.

35 MINUTES

C) **15 minutes -** Class to be addressed as one big unit. Teacher to acknowledge that last scenario done was very mild choices and consequences. Teacher to ask students for examples from either their own lives or the lives of people they know where there have been more difficult choices to make and consequences to consider. Students are to be given time to think of situations (allow some silence). If students appear stuck, teacher can give an example (drink driving etc). Discuss what choices were made, why might people make those choices, note any impacts on other people from those choices. From responses teacher can distinguish what examples are mostly about personal consequences and which show social consequences. Teacher to make the point that we have to consider ourselves and other people when we are making choices and considering the consequences.

50 MINUTES

Essential closing activity

D) **10 minutes -** Students are asked to consider the lesson they have just had and provide feedback about it. Teacher comments that names are not required and students are to feel free to be honest in their comments. The teacher hands out the 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet. The questions are: 1. Something new I learnt in the lesson today was __, 2. Something that challenged me during today's lesson was __, 3. Something that worked really well in today's lesson was __, 4. Something that did not work well in today's lesson was __, 5. Other things I want to say are __. Teachers are to collect these sheets at the end of the lesson.

60 MINUTES

RESOURCES NEEDED
- 'Scenario – choices and consequences' sheet for Activity A (one for each student).
- 'Role-play' sheet with questions for Activity B (one for each student).
- Pieces of paper with positions stated for Activity B (one for each group).
- 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet for Activity D (one for each student).

LESSON PLAN 3 – Knowing and Understanding Yourself and Others

MAIN IDEA	EVALUATION
That by understanding our thoughts and feelings, and the similarities and differences we have with other people, we can make better choices for others and ourselves. OBJECTIVES The student is able to: • Get a greater awareness of how others may view them. • Identify their likely reactions to certain situations. • Consider how they may impact on others.	• Listen to the students' discussions throughout the lesson. • Have students complete the 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet at the end of the lesson.

ACTIVITIES WITH TIME FRAME

A) **15 minutes -** Teacher to give each student a copy of the 'Personality Quiz'. Students are asked to complete the quiz individually and add up their scores. While this is happening, the teacher hands out the categories for each score and tells students to read where they fell due to their score. Students are then asked to get into groups with others who scored the same category. In order to make this easy, the category scores will be placed around the room by the teacher so students can move to that area. Students are then to discuss briefly if they think the category applied to them. Students will stay in this group for Activity B.

B) **20 minutes -** Students are given a sheet, 'Understanding my Responses', with questions/statements written on it. Students discuss the questions/statements in their group and they write in the answers that fit with their group. Each group then reports to the class the answers their group came up with to each question. The teacher asks the class what they noticed about other people's responses. Were all responses the same? What does this tell us about understanding ourselves and other people? Students to consider how the way they react and feel may impact on someone from a different group. For example: what if a confident, assertive person spoke forthrightly to a shy, quiet person. How can the messages be misunderstood? How can we be considerate?

35 MINUTES

C) **15 minutes -** Students are to pick a partner from a different group (they have 30 seconds to do so). In these pairs, students discuss a time they have impacted negatively on someone due to their feelings and actions. Teachers give students a sheet, 'Appreciating my impact on others', with questions/comments to consider while discussing this situation. Questions will include: Why did it happen (what were they thinking, feeling, frightened about etc. – what was their role in it?) What could they have done differently?

50 MINUTES

Essential closing activity

D) **10 minutes -** Students are asked to consider the lesson they have just had and provide feedback about it. Teacher comments that names are not required and students are to feel free to be honest in their comments. The teacher hands out the 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet. The questions are: 1. Something new I learnt in the lesson today was __, 2. Something that challenged me during today's lesson was __, 3. Something that worked really well in today's lesson was __, 4. Something that did not work well in today's lesson was __, 5. Other things I want to say are __. Teachers are to collect these sheets at the end of the lesson.

60 MINUTES

RESOURCES NEEDED
• 'Personality Quiz' sheet and 'Personality Quiz scoring' sheet for Activity A (one for each student).
• 'Understanding my Responses' sheet for Activity B (one for each student).
• 'Appreciating my impact on others' sheet for Activity C (one for each student).
• 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet for Activity D (one for each student).

LESSON PLAN 4 – Rights and Responsibilities

MAIN IDEA	EVALUATION
That with rights come responsibilities. OBJECTIVES The student is able to: • Identify their rights and responsibilities. • Appreciate the connection between rights and responsibilities. • Consider how the choices they make now may impact on their future.	• Listen to the student's discussions during lesson. • Student's responses to Activity D will demonstrate their understanding. • Have students complete the 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet at the end of the lesson.

ACTIVITIES WITH TIME FRAME

A) **10 minutes -** Teacher to ask students, "how would you define/explain/understand a right?" Discuss. Then put up OHT with, "A right is something every human being needs no matter who they are or where they live. A right is something that everyone should and would have if the world was always fair and just". What do students think about this explanation? Teacher to ask students, "how would you define/explain/understand a responsibility?" Discuss. Then put up OHT with, "A responsibility is something that is your job to do something about, or to think about. It is something that affects our lives and other people's lives". What do students think about this explanation?

B) **15 minutes –** Students get into small groups of three or four. The teacher gives each group a small bag that has words in it and the Rights and Responsibilities sheet. The students are asked to separate the words into those that they feel are 'their rights' and those that are not. Students are told to write the rights they chose on the sheet provided, and to come up with the responsibilities that go with them.

25 MINUTES

C) **5 minutes -** Step 1: Teacher hands out the 'Spiderman' activity sheet to every student to do individually. Students are told to answer the questions as they watch the video excerpt. The questions are:
1. What does Uncle Ben feel that Peter does not have the right to do?
2. Why does Uncle Ben feel that Peter is now in an important stage of his life?
3. Fill in the blanks on the following quote that Uncle Ben says to Peter: With _____ _____ comes great _____.

5 minutes - Step 2: After the video has finished, the teacher asks students to call out the answers to the questions on the sheet. Students are asked to focus on question 3 – the quote by Uncle Ben. The teacher asks the students: What does this statement mean? Do you agree with this sentiment? Why/why not? Do you think this statement applies more as you get older? Why/why not?

35 MINUTES

D) **15 minutes -** Teacher to mention what Uncle Ben in Spiderman video said about Peter having 'great power' and now making the choices that will define the man he becomes. Teacher asks class, "What do you think personal power may refer to?" Teacher to wait for student input and discuss. Teacher then to provide an explanation of personal power on an OHT. As a class discussion, teachers ask students what power and responsibilities are specific to their age, specific to their increased maturity, increased freedom, and young adulthood. Do they have power and responsibilities now that they did not have when they were younger? Will their power and responsibilities change when they leave school? When they leave home? Do they feel that they are making choices that will affect the adult they become?

50 MINUTES

Essential closing activity
E) **10 minutes -** Students are asked to consider the lesson they have just had and provide feedback about it. Teacher comments that names are not required and students are to feel free to be honest in their comments. The teacher hands out the 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet. The questions are: 1. Something new I learnt in the lesson today was __, 2. Something that challenged me during today's lesson was __, 3. Something that worked really well in today's lesson was __, 4. Something that did not work well in today's lesson was __, 5. Other things I want to say are __. Teachers are to collect these sheets at the end of the lesson.

60 MINUTES

RESOURCES NEEDED
• OHT with definition of Rights and definition of Responsibilities for Activity A (for teacher).
• Bag of words that may or may not be student's rights for Activity B (one for each group).
• 'Rights and Responsibilities' sheet for Activity B (one for each student).
• Spiderman video set up to start at appropriate place for Activity C.
• 'Spiderman video' activity sheet for Activity C (one for each student).
• OHT with definition of Personal Power for Activity D (for teacher).
• OHT with example of Personal Power for Activity D (for teacher).
• 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet for Activity E (one for each student).

LESSON PLAN 5 – Social Responsibility

MAIN IDEA	EVALUATION
Society has rules partly because the choices we make and the way we behave affects other people. OBJECTIVES The student is able to: • Explain why rules are important to the effective running of a society. • Appreciate that their choices can and do impact on other people	• Listen to the students' discussions throughout the lesson. • Have students complete the 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet at the end of the lesson.

ACTIVITIES WITH TIME FRAME

A) **5 minutes –** Teacher to ask students what they think social responsibility is about. After students have offered answers, teacher to put up OHT with definition of Social Responsibility.

B**) 20 minutes - Step 1:** In groups of six, students imagine that they are the only people on an uninhabited island. Teacher hands out to each group a piece of butchers paper, felt pens, a sheet 'Create your own island' with focus questions on it, and each group member gets given one card which has a role listed on it. Teacher is to tell the students to take on this role for the exercise, and consider what rules/laws the person in that role would think are necessary. The teacher tells the students that as a group they must come up with a name for their island and 10 rules that will determine how their island runs and write these on the butchers paper. Students are given leeway with how they choose to present their island and its rules on their paper. They are told that as they do this activity they must think about the questions on the piece of paper they have. These questions will include: Why are your rules important? How will they restrict people? How will they protect people? What considerations other than people did you have?

20 minutes - Step 2: In groups, students are to report their island name and their rules to the class. They are to read out their answers to the questions on their 'Create your own island' sheet also.

45 MINUTES

C) **10 minutes -** As a class discussion, teacher to ask students what that exercise makes them think about rules in society. Why do we have them? Should we always follow rules? What happens when people don't follow the rules? What happens when people refuse to take responsibility? Do we have a responsibility toward other people? Do people have a responsibility toward us? What are our social responsibilities?

55 MINUTES

Essential closing activity

D) **10 minutes -** Students are asked to consider the lesson they have just had and provide feedback about it. Teacher comments that names are not required and students are to feel free to be honest in their comments. The teacher hands out the 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet. The questions are: 1. Something new I learnt in the lesson today was __, 2. Something that challenged me during today's lesson was __, 3. Something that worked really well in today's lesson was __, 4. Something that did not work well in today's lesson was __, 5. Other things I want to say are __. Teachers are to collect these sheets at the end of the lesson.

65 MINUTES

RESOURCES NEEDED
• OHT with definition of Social Responsibility for Activity A (for teacher).
• Butchers paper for Activity B (one big piece for each group).
• Felt pens for Activity B (four colours for each group).
• 'Create your own island' sheet with focus questions for Activity B (one for each group).
• Cards which have a role listed on each one for Activity B (six for each group).
• 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet for activity C (one for each student).