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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC ENTITLEMENT,  
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, AND SATISFACTION WITH LIFE  
IN A COLLEGE STUDENT POPULATION

A Dissertation  
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of Leadership and Counselor Education  
The University of Mississippi

by

REBEKAH H. REYSEN

August 2013

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## ABSTRACT

Although academic entitlement (AE) has become a popular topic of discussion in the media, it has received very little scholarly focus in the higher education literature to date. AE has been defined as a belief held by students that they deserve high grades in school despite a lack of effort put forth into their work (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). AE has been linked to a variety of inappropriate behaviors in the classroom including sleeping during class or being rude to the instructor (Mellor, 2011). These uncivil behaviors pose as frustrating obstacles to the learning process for students and instructors. To date, few studies have yet been published that address the relationship between AE and other potentially relevant variables such as satisfaction with life and academic performance. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between AE, life satisfaction, and academic performance as measured by cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA). Two college student groups were utilized – those who were considered to be academically at-risk, as defined by having a cumulative GPA less than 2.0; and those who were considered to be academically non-at-risk, as characterized by having a cumulative GPA above 2.0. Additionally, the researcher sought to examine the differences between academically at-risk and non-at-risk students for AE and life satisfaction as well as the relationships between AE, satisfaction with life, and GPA within both student groups. Using purposive sampling, the researcher acquired 146 non-at-risk student participants from an introductory psychology class and 165 at-risk students from a course that focused on academic success. Results included academically at-risk students scoring significantly higher on AE and lower on satisfaction with life than their non-at-risk peers. Additionally, no significant relationship was found between

both AE and GPA and AE and satisfaction with life for either group. Last, a significant relationship was found between GPA and life satisfaction but only for the non-at-risk students. Both the implications and limitations of these findings are discussed, as well as suggestions for future studies.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Matt; my daughters, Summer and Ember; and my parents, Robert and Rebecca.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the assistance of many mentors, family members, friends, and colleagues.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Academic entitlement (AE), a popular topic of discussion in the media (e.g., podcasts, YouTube videos, commentary posted on the Chronicle of Higher Education website), is a belief held by students that they deserve high grades in school regardless of effort put forth into their work (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). And although it is a term that has been bandied about in the media, AE has received only minimal scholarly attention. Yet this attitude has been speculated to be the cause of inappropriate student behaviors such as expressing anger or being rude to the instructor, talking on a cell phone or sleeping during lecture, having side conversations with other students during class (Mellor, 2011) and disregarding mandatory campus events (Kopp & Finney, in press), to name a few. These inappropriate behaviors present significant obstacles to teaching and learning, which limits instructor effectiveness. And, in this age of high stakes testing and faculty accountability, it is clear that additional information on student attitudes towards education and achievement would benefit educators.

Since 1986 (Dubovsky), professors have been noting incidences in the AE literature based upon personal experience. The following comment, shared by an academically at-risk undergraduate, is an example of what is considered to be academically entitled behavior. Not only is disrespect towards the instructor exhibited, also evident is the student's disregard for course assignments and learning environment, as this comment was included in an assigned paper addressing the student's utilization of study skills:

I see this assignment as busy work and a total waste of time. The other night I played

Call of Duty instead of studying for a test and still got a B. [...] if you [instructor's name] plan on giving me a bad grade because I don't agree with anything you have had us do; then you are a miserable person who only wishes to tick everybody off.

This and similar behaviors can be the source of aggravation and stress for many professors and can be especially frustrating for those who invest a great deal of time and energy in working to optimize the learning process for students. A more comprehensive understanding of AE, a particularly insidious form of incivility in the classroom, can be beneficial for educators and students at every level.

Unfortunately, although there appears to be a growing sense of entitlement in the current generation (Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2010; Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2011), few studies have been conducted on AE specifically. Entitlement, in general, has been associated with a variety of negative belief systems or behaviors, including hostility (Raskin & Terry, 1988), aggression, and selfishness (Campbell et al., 2004). These negative connotations underscore the need to better understand entitlement in all its forms, including AE.

According to Singleton-Jackson et al. (2011), research still needs to be conducted on the accurate defining, measuring, and understanding of AE's role in student academic success. Little is known about its influence on student learning or academic performance. In fact, a Boolean search for "academic entitlement" in peer-reviewed journals via EBSCOhost yielded just around a dozen entries. And of these studies, a small minority has actually addressed the relationship between AE and student academic performance (Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, & Farruggia, 2008; Jackson, Singleton-Jackson, & Frey, 2011). Yet the existing literature (Greenberger et al., 2008; Hsieh, Sullivan, & Guerra, 2007; Jackson et al., 2011; Pino & Smith, 2004) has shown that student attitudes influence student learning and the most frequently used metric applied to college student success is grade point average (GPA). And as students grow more familiar with the college academic environment, their attitude of entitlement may grow in direct proportion to

the number of years they have spent on campus. Further, there may be other variables that increase levels of academic entitlement as well as further hinder successful matriculation through college. This study will provide a means by which to better understand AE and its relation to academic progress and success.

### **Rationale**

Entitlement was first placed within an academic context by Dubovsky (1986) who taught medical students. Kopp et al. (2011) built their research upon Dubovsky's, along with Achacoso (2002), Chowning and Campbell (2009), Greenberger et al. (2008), Hersh and Merrow (2005), and Shelley (2005). Kopp et al. (2011) conceptualized academically entitled students as holding beliefs that: 1) students "deserve to learn" and that learning should not be strenuous; 2) students should not have to be proactive in gathering information for greater knowledge; rather, the professor is responsible for that; 3) any learning-related problems are not due to the deficiencies of the student, but rather, are due to deficiencies of the academic domain, the instructor, etc.; 4) students should be able to dictate the policies made by the instructor for the course; and 5) since students pay to be at the university, they have a right to certain grades. These behaviors present obstacles to the learning process and reflect attitudes within the academic environment.

Clearly, students' attitudes influence their learning (Greenberger et al., 2008; Hsieh, Sullivan, & Guerra, 2007; Jackson et. al, 2011; Pino & Smith, 2004; Singleton-Jackson et. al., 2011) and we measure their learning by their earned grades and their GPAs. Thus, it was surprising that Greenberger et al. found no statistically significant relationship between AE values and GPA. However, other researchers have found a relationship between AE and other academic and gender-related variables. Hartman (2012) discovered that male students experienced an increase in AE during the latter half of their college careers while female students

experienced a decline during that same period. Taking into consideration the studies conducted by Greenberger et al. and Hartman, it appears that the relationship between AE and GPA has only been minimally researched and, thus, warrants further exploration. This study will extend both Hartman's and Greenberger et al.'s research to determine if AE, GPA, and number of attempted credit hours are significantly related to one another.

In addition to the research cited above, several studies (Achacoso, 2002; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Greenberger et al., 2008; Hartman, 2012; Kopp et al., 2011) have been conducted that explored AE levels within the current cohort of college students, termed the Millennial Generation. Millennials are generally considered to be individuals who were born between the years of 1982 and 2009 (Alexander & Sysko, 2011), although these boundary years vary slightly in the literature. Although Millennials have been acknowledged as having a variety of specific strengths, such as appreciating teamwork in the classroom, being adept at using technology, desiring social connectedness, and devotion to specific supervisors (as opposed to organizations) (Alexander & Sysko, 2011; McGlynn, 2008; Papp, 2010), they have also been called hedonistic, narcissistic (Alexander & Sysko, 2011), entitled, and unhappy (Twenge, 2006). One of the aims of this study is to further explore how academic entitlement manifests and is related to the academic performance of this generation of college students.

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), 68% of individuals aged 16-24 attended college in 2011; this translates roughly into 12.8 million students. All of these individuals can be categorized as members of the Millennial population. Millennials, like other generations, may be drawn towards pursuing a degree in higher education for reasons that include earning higher salaries over the course of their lifetimes as well as acquiring the skills necessary to fulfill certain job requirements (Carnevale, Strohl, & Melton, 2012). Even though

many individuals aspire to obtain an advanced degree, not all students will actually complete their degree programs. Many will either drop out completely or drop back in the number of hours attempted each semester. Others may earn failing grades in their coursework that will result in academic probation (James & Graham, 2010). And, not surprisingly, researchers have found that students who are on probation have a much lower likelihood of graduating from college than those whose performance is above the threshold for probationary status (Mathies, Gardner, & Webber Bauer, 2006).

Many universities have established retention programs in order to help students on probation succeed academically. Although such programs exist, James and Graham (2010) argued that determining exactly which interventions are useful in helping such students succeed is not an easy task. Furthermore, Trombley (2000) stated that many retention programs may implement interventions despite having only a limited understanding of their students. The aim of the current study is to explore the relationship between academic performance, AE, and satisfaction with life. These relationships may be of particular interest to retention program personnel.

This study explored the correlation between AE scores and academic performance. Further understanding the relationship between these variables may provide retention program faculty and staff valuable information with which to develop more effective programs.

In addition to exploring the relationship between AE and academic performance in a college student population, this study explored the relationship between these two variables and satisfaction with life. Satisfaction with life was conceptualized by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) as a cognitive analysis of one's subjective well-being. Although satisfaction with life has been researched in a variety of different contexts over the last several decades, only a

few studies explored the relationship between this construct and academic performance (Chow, 2005; Dwyer, 2008; Rode et al., 2005). Furthermore, no publications exist which explored the relationship between satisfaction with life and AE. The relationship between these two variables was also analyzed in this study, for both academically at-risk and non-at-risk student populations. To accomplish this, the Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ; Kopp et al., 2011) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) was utilized to measure these variables. Thus, this study will hopefully fill several niches in the higher education literature.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this correlational study was to explore the relationship between AE, academic performance, and satisfaction with life among college students. The dependent variables that were explored include AE, academic performance as measured by GPA, and satisfaction with life, while the independent variable was academic standing (whether a student is considered to be academically at-risk or non-at-risk). The statistical analyses that were utilized included the Independent Samples t-Test and the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. The following research questions were explored:

RQ1: Is there a significant difference between at-risk and non-at-risk students for

AE?

RQ2(a): Is there a significant relationship between academic performance and AE for

non-at-risk students?

RQ2(b): Is there a significant relationship between academic performance and AE for at-

risk students?

RQ3: Is there a significant difference between at-risk and non-at-risk students for

satisfaction with life?

RQ4(a): Is there a significant relationship between academic performance and satisfaction with life for non-at-risk students?

RQ4(b): Is there a significant relationship between academic performance and satisfaction with life for at-risk students?

RQ5(a): Is there a significant relationship between satisfaction with life and AE for non-at-risk students?

RQ5(b): Is there a significant relationship between satisfaction with life and AE for at-risk students?

### **Definitions of Terms**

Entitlement: According to Raskin and Terry (1988), entitlement refers to the assumption that one should receive special treatment above and beyond the norms defined by one's society.

Academic entitlement: According to Greenberger et al. (2008), AE is characterized by student demands for high marks despite putting forth an amount of effort that warrants lower grades.

Academically at-risk college students: According to Tinto (1993), students who fall into this category are at risk of not graduating from college due to academic difficulties (e.g., failing a course(s)). For this study, academically at-risk students were considered to be individuals who had been placed on academic probation, or returning from academic suspension or dismissal, and were participating in a course geared towards academic success.

According to James and Graham (2010), students are placed on probation when their GPA falls beneath a specific cut off point, defined by each university. For the students who participated in this study, the cut-off point was a 2.00 cumulative GPA. This cut off point was defined by the university where this study took place.

Academically non-at-risk college students: Juxtaposed to the academically at-risk college student category, these students were considered to be in good standing at the university where this study took place. In this case, good standing refers to students who were neither on academic probation nor returning from suspension or dismissal.

Millennial Generation: Individuals who were born between the years 1982 and 2009 (Alexander & Sysko, 2011).

Satisfaction with Life: The concept of satisfaction with life, as the name denotes, is defined as a cognitive appraisal of how content one is with his or her life (Diener et al., 1985).

Retention: According to Crosling, Thomas, and Heagney (2008), retention is defined as the number of students that continue to take courses at an institution of higher education.

### **Statement of Significance**

Since maintaining an adequate GPA is critical to fulfilling college degree requirements, a greater understanding of the factors that affect a student's academic performance is important (Trombley, 2000). This study will contribute to the understanding provided by existing studies in several ways. First, only a few studies have been conducted on the relationship between academic performance and satisfaction with life (Chow, 2005; Dwyer, 2008; Rode et al., 2005). The studies that have been conducted on this topic were carried out at institutions that were dissimilar to the university where the current research took place, in both size and location. In addition, no studies have yet been published on the relationship between AE and satisfaction with life.

This research will also contribute to our knowledge of the relationship between AE and academic performance. Although several studies have explored AE using Millennial participants (Achacoso, 2002; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Greenberger et al., 2008; Hartman, 2012; Kopp

et al., 2011), few published studies have addressed the relationship between AE and academic performance (Greenberger et al., 2008). Furthermore, only two studies incorporated the use of the AEQ (Kopp et al., 2011; Kopp & Finney, in press), the assessment that was used in this study to assess levels of AE.

### **Statement of Limitations**

There are several potential limitations to this study. First, the data that was obtained by the researcher was from a single Southern university in the US. The college students who were enrolled at this university may have had their own, unique characteristics that may make the results of this study less generalizable to college students from other areas of the US. Second, the participants in this study were volunteers. This willingness to take part may be indicative of other, unknown characteristics that may inherently influence the results of this study.

Third, data was acquired from participants using self-report methods. This data collection process may not be entirely reliable, as some participants may be either hesitant to share their true beliefs for fear of being viewed as academically entitled or unhappy. Furthermore, these participants may have responded in a way that they believed the researcher would have liked for them to respond.

Fourth, incentives were offered to all participants. Although this method may have aided in recruiting participants, it may have also attracted those who wanted to participate solely to obtain the incentive. Thus, this method may have likely altered the composition of the participant group in some manner.

Last, the AEQ (Kopp et al., 2011) that was used in this study is a relatively new assessment of AE. However, the AEQ has shown a strong degree of validity and reliability in the studies where it has been utilized (Kopp et al., 2011; Kopp & Finney, in press).

## **Overview**

This dissertation is comprised of three chapters. Chapter II is a review of the existing literature related to student retention, the Millennial Generation, entitlement, AE, academic performance and satisfaction with life. Chapter III includes a discussion of the measurements that were utilized to assess AE, academic performance, and satisfaction with life for both academically at-risk and non-at-risk college students, as well as the procedures that were used to conduct this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Maintaining an adequate GPA is crucial for those seeking to graduate from college. Identifying the specific relationships that exist between academic performance and the factors that are related to academic achievement may aid university personnel in knowing how to better help their students. To date, minimal research has been conducted on the relationship between academic entitlement (AE), academic performance as measured by Grade Point Average (GPA), and life satisfaction among college students. The findings that were acquired from this study may help all university administrators, faculty, staff, and students develop a greater understanding of the role that AE and life satisfaction play in the success of one's college career.

The current section will first examine the importance of obtaining a college degree, as well as the difficulty many students have in graduating from college. Second, the Millennial generation will be discussed, as it is the generation that comprises a significant proportion of the college student population today. Specifically, an overview of the existing literature on Millennials will be provided, as well as a discussion of how some researchers consider this generation to be both entitled and unhappy. Third, various definitions of entitlement will be explored, particularly AE, as well as summarize the relevant literature that focuses on these two areas. Last, the concept of life satisfaction, including how it has been defined and researched over time, as well as its connection to AE and academic performance, will be discussed.

#### **The Value of a College Degree**

Obtaining a college degree benefits individuals in many ways. According to a study

conducted by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce (Carnevale, Strohl, & Melton, 2012), college degree holders earn 84% more money over the course of their lives than high school graduates – indeed, approximately \$1,000,000 more over the life span. These researchers also projected that by the year 2018, 63% of all jobs in the US will be filled by workers who have more than a high school education. These statistics underscore the value found through attaining a college degree.

For many individuals choosing to attend college, the process of obtaining a degree from an institution of higher education is not without its challenges. According to the American College Testing organization (ACT, 2012), on average only 36% of college students attending public universities complete their bachelor's degrees within five years and 54.7% of private institution attendees do so. Also interesting to note are the findings of Bound, Lovenheim, and Turner (2010), who discovered that eight-year college graduation rates decreased between 1972 and 1992, from just over 50% to approximately 46%, even though there was an increase in college enrollees over the years. These surprising statistics indicate that the concept of the "4-year-degree" has become a striking misnomer, and that college completion rates have become a major concern to many education experts. These statistics also lend support to claims by some researchers that the US educational system is flawed and action needs to be taken by administrators to better educate our students (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2011). In short, it is obvious that even though many students are accepted into institutions of higher education, they are not guaranteed a degree.

Many universities have established retention programs that are geared towards helping students succeed in college once they have enrolled, including the university where this study occurred. Retention program administrators may choose to utilize interventions such as

orientation sessions, mentoring by a faculty member, grade monitoring, tutoring, and learning opportunities that are either group-oriented or supported by Supplemental Instruction, to name a few (Myers, 2003). According to the *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice* website (<http://www.baywood.com/journals/previewjournals.asp?id=1521-0251>), programs aimed towards student retention are often supported by large amounts of money. This indicates that retention programs are considered to be valuable components of many universities.

Despite the favorable image of retention programs, however, their personnel certainly face a variety of challenges when working with academically at-risk undergraduates. These challenges include working with students who have been allowed to enroll in school despite being significantly underprepared for higher education coursework (Bound et al., 2010) as well as trying to increase the already low graduation rates for first generation and low-income college students (Fenderson, 2012). Furthermore, researchers such as James and Graham (2010) have emphasized the difficulty of discovering proper interventions to use with students on probation. Additionally, some researchers argue that various retention interventions have been implemented by institutions of higher education despite administrators having limited knowledge of the student populations they are trying to serve (Trombley, 2000). Thus, evidence exists which suggests that even though acquiring a college education is considered essential to professional success by some Americans, our educational system may also be considered as struggling to meet the needs of our students. To better assist college students, university faculty and personnel must first begin to understand the unique characteristics of college students in our present day society. One distinction of our current college student population is that it belongs to the Millennial Generation.

## **The Millennial Generation**

Traditional-aged college students are considered members of the Millennial generation. This generation has also been referred to as “Generation Y” (Alexander & Sysko, 2011) and “Generation Me” (Twenge, 2006). People who were born between the years of 1982 and 2009 are said to fall into this category (Alexander & Sysko, 2011), although the specific boundary years may vary in the literature. As with any generation, Millennials have their own unique characteristics. Specifically, Millennials have been considered as highly adept in mastering various forms of technology (Papp, 2010), are teamwork-oriented (McGlynn, 2008), and demonstrate loyalty to managers and commitment to organizational values (Alexander & Sysko, 2011). Although Alexander and Sysko (2011) noted that the Millennials' shortcomings are compensated for by their strengths, they highlighted the negative perspective that many hold for this generation when they noted that Millennials may also exhibit narcissistic traits and a lazy orientation towards work. Due to the wide range of assumptions about this demographic group, one of the primary purposes of this study is to assess the levels of AE among contemporary, traditional-aged college students.

### **Millennials in the Academic Environment**

Retention rates such as those provided by the ACT (2012) and Bound et al. (2010) indicate that many Millennials are struggling academically. In the efforts to increase enrollment, many colleges admit increasing numbers of students who may be unable to easily succeed in college coursework. And, according to Tinto (1993), students who fall into the academically at-risk category have a greater likelihood of failing to graduate from college due to academic difficulties (e.g., failing a course/s). What constitutes the operational definition of “struggling,” however, depends on the university (James & Graham, 2010). At the university where this study

occurred, students must maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA in order to graduate from the university. For this study, academically at-risk students were considered to be those who have been placed on academic probation, were returning from academic suspension or dismissal, and/or were participating in a special course designed to increase student success. Considering that only 36% of students at American public universities complete their degrees within a five-year time frame (ACT, 2012), these retention efforts may be crucial in offering at-risk students a better chance of graduating from college.

**Academically at-risk students.** There are a wide variety of factors that may contribute to college students being placed on academic probation. Typically, a student's cumulative GPA is the measure used to determine a student's academic status; this level may differ depending on the college or university (James & Graham, 2010). Some of the factors that have been linked to academic performance in college include course absences (Durden & Ellis, 1995), high school GPA, maintaining employment in addition to being a student, personal issues, and family responsibilities (Trombley, 2000). The analyses conducted in this study will hopefully reveal other important factors, such as the relationships between academic performance, life satisfaction, and AE.

### **Millennials and Life Satisfaction**

In addition to struggling academically, evidence exists that many Millennials are unhappy. Twenge (2006) completed a thorough review of research addressing the Millennial generation which was published in the book, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled, and More Miserable than Ever Before*. During her research, Twenge found that the prevalence of anxiety and depression had increased significantly over the past few decades. Twenge noticed that the typical college student in the 1990s scored

higher on anxiety assessments than 85% of those who attended college in the 1950s. Twenge also found that between the late 1980s and late 1990s, the percentage of children who had been prescribed medication for mood-related issues tripled. Furthermore, Twenge argued that Millennials may be at risk for greater mental health-related issues due to pressures such as dealing with increased competition to be accepted by prestigious colleges, a high divorce rate among their parents, as well as unrealistic personal expectations that stem from our society's focus on consumerism.

Other researchers agree with Twenge (2006). Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein, and Hefner (2007) found that 16% of college students suffered from depression and/or anxiety. Of the college students who completed the nationally-distributed American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment in 2011, approximately 30% said that at some point within the last 12 months they had been "so depressed that it was difficult to function," while approximately 50% felt "overwhelming anxiety" during this same time frame. According to the National Center for Health Statistics (2011), suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth aged 15-24. These findings support an exploration of the life satisfaction levels for Millennials. In the current study, the researcher explored the levels of life satisfaction for Millennial college students in particular.

### **Millennials and the Challenge of AE**

According to Raskin and Terry (1988), entitlement is referred to as the assumption that one should receive special treatment above and beyond the norms defined by one's society. In order to differentiate between a sense of entitlement in general and specific forms of entitlement (e.g., AE), some authors have referred to this broad phenomenon as generalized entitlement (Kopp, Zinn, Finney, & Jurich, 2011) or psychological entitlement (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton,

Exline, & Bushman, 2004).

Researchers such as Campbell et al. (2004) suggested that generalized entitlement is related to one's personality and holds constant for a variety of different situations. Other researchers have purported that individuals may be prone to context-specific entitlement issues, such as those related to academics. Chowning and Campbell (2009), for example, emphasized that although some students may exhibit a sense of entitlement regarding course grades, they may not display the same sense of entitlement outside of the academic context. Chowning and Campbell's definition of entitlement will be used throughout the proposed project, as it will take into consideration various forms of entitlement.

Several negative connotations are associated with the concept of entitlement. Entitlement has been linked to a variety of negative characteristics, including aggression, selfishness pertaining to relationship issues (Campbell et al., 2004), abuse of one's co-worker(s) (Harvey & Harris, 2010), and deficits in modesty (Curry, 2010). Individuals who score high on both entitlement and narcissistic measures are also more likely to hold a grudge against others as opposed to forgiving them (Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004). Furthermore, research indicates that entitled students have become especially challenging to many professors' time and energy constraints (Lippmann, Bulanda, & Wagenaar, 2009). This study will provide an opportunity to further explore the AE construct.

### **Academic Entitlement**

Unlike generalized entitlement, AE has not been a major focus in the scholarly literature. For example, a Lexis/Nexus Academic (2012) search for "sense of entitlement" elicited close to 1,000 results. A search for "academic entitlement," however, elicited only 11 results. A Boolean search in EBSCOhost for "sense of entitlement" in peer-reviewed journals elicited 485

results, whereas “academic entitlement” yielded just 11. This study, however, will be an attempt to contribute to the literature already published on AE, and at a time when many university administrators and academicians are seeking to understand which factors are related to college student success.

According to Chowning and Campbell (2009), the definition of AE is “the tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without taking responsibility for that success” (p. 982). Chowning and Campbell (2009) stated that AE may be directly related to student behavior that is not conducive to classroom learning. This is related to the concept of incivility in the classroom. Nine behaviors in particular have been identified as uncivil student behaviors in the classroom. These behaviors include: 1) acting bored in class, 2) showing anger, 3) being rude to the instructor, 4) sleeping, 5) having side conversations with other students, 6) talking on the phone, 7) disputing grades in a disrespectful manner, 8) leaving the classroom without the instructor’s consent, and 9) using technology in a way that impedes the learning process (Mellor, 2011). Kopp and Finney (in press) also found that those who score higher on AE are also more likely to skip mandatory campus-related events. Thus, AE may not only encompass a sense of entitlement in the academic realm, but may also be problematic behaviors such as those stated above.

The following comment was written by a student who was classified as academically at-risk at the university where this study was conducted. The student included this statement in a reflection paper that was assessed for course credit. This expectation of receiving course credit with minimal effort, while degrading the instructor, is what some researchers consider to be academically-entitled behavior:

You [Instructor’s name] talk about how you want to help us stay at the school when you turn around and give work that in no way helps us to do any better. I was told this was a

class that would help me with all my classes when all it has done is waste my time and my parent's money.

Kopp et al. (2011) stated that AE has become a major disconcerting issue for institutions of higher education. Other researchers, such as Dubovsky (1986) and Twenge (2009) have provided support for this statement by noting that AE can be quite problematic to professors. Lippmann, Bulanda, and Wagenaar (2009) emphasized that although student entitlement can be a source of significant stress for instructors, faculty are not always sure how to handle AE-related behavior. Hopefully the results of this study will illuminate such factors, so that future researchers can establish ways of intervening with academically entitled students.

There is existing research on entitlement within an academic context (Dubovsky, 1986; Morrow, 1994), including the relationship between AE and psychological entitlement, narcissism (Greenberger et al. 2008), gender (Ciani, Summers, & Easter, 2009), parent-related issues, self-esteem, work ethic (Greenberger et al. 2008), year in school (Hartman, 2012), and medical education (Dubovsky, 1986). These publications indicate that few published studies were conducted from the time entitlement was first placed in an academic context to its reexamination in 2008 with Greenberger et al.'s article.

Dubovsky (1986) was one of the first researchers to study entitlement within the academic domain. Through his own experience with medical students, Dubovsky found five key elements that were common to student-related entitlement. These factors include: 1) a belief that students are entitled to learning opportunities and that the learning process itself should not require much effort; 2) students should rely on the instructor for disseminating knowledge and knowledge acquisition is not their responsibility; 3) any difficulties encountered in the learning process are not the result of weaknesses of the student, but rather, are the result of problematic instructors, learning environments, etc.; 4) all students should be recognized in the same manner,

even if some are more talented or skilled; 5) if dissatisfied with their grades or the learning process, students are entitled to act aggressively towards their instructor. Clearly these factors pose as significant obstacles to teaching and learning for the professor.

Morrow (1994) described entitlement as hindering the learning process to the extent that it demoralizes the whole institution of higher education. Morrow conceptualized entitled students as demanding acceptance into any higher education institution no matter what level of academic performance they had previously demonstrated. He emphasized that entitled students will frequently place blame on the university, curriculum, and/or instructor when they do not succeed. Additionally, Morrow viewed the academically entitled student as believing success to be one's right instead of the product of hard work or talent. In short, Morrow was one of the first researchers to make the prediction that AE will cause the educational system to take a turn for the worse, one where the purpose of learning loses all of its meaning and value.

Kopp et al. (2011) have also published in the area of AE. Their study shares commonalities with other researchers including Dubovsky (1986), Morrow (1994), Achacoso (2002), Chowning and Campbell (2009), Greenberger et al. (2008), Hersh and Merrow (2005), and Shelley (2005). Kopp et al. (2011) conceptualized academically entitled students as holding beliefs that: 1) students are owed the opportunity to an education, although the learning process itself should be relatively easy; 2) acquiring knowledge is not their responsibility, but rather, it is their professors' duty to impart knowledge to them; 3) issues encountered throughout the educational process are not due to their own mistakes; other circumstances, such as the instructor or environment, should be blamed; 4) course policies should be negotiated, depending on student opinions; 5) students are owed higher grades since they have purchasing power in the form of paying tuition. These elements make it clear that AE has been conceptualized in a similar

manner amongst a variety of researchers.

Greenberger et al. (2008) investigated the relationship between AE, academic performance, and academic dishonesty in a college student population. These researchers found that students who scored higher on AE were more likely to be academically dishonest and to feel entitled in general. Greenberger et al. also found that AE and academic performance, as measured by GPA, did not have a significant relationship. Although this study is significant because it indicates that negative qualities are associated with academically entitled students, it would be important to conduct additional studies on the relationship between AE and GPA to see if Greenberger et al.'s results can be replicated using other samples. As Greenberger et al.'s sample consisted mainly of Asian Americans, it would be interesting to explore the relationship between AE and GPA with other diverse student samples. The current study was conducted using a sample that had a significantly different cultural composition than Greenberger et al.'s.

In addition to AE and its relationship to GPA, the relationship between AE and a student's year in school has also been explored. Hartman (2012) conducted a study on AE (what Hartman referred to as "academic self-entitlement") and its relationship to year in school and gender. Hartman found that males experienced an increase in academic self-entitlement during their junior and senior years while females experienced a decline in academic self-entitlement during this same time period. This study was built on both Hartman's and Greenberger et al.'s (2008) research to see if cumulative GPA, academic year, and AE are significantly related. This dynamic has not yet been explored in the AE literature.

### **Factors Affecting AE**

Researchers have speculated that a variety of factors may influence students to develop an attitude of academic entitlement. Some believe that parenting practices (Greenberger et al.,

2008) and the self-esteem movement (Twenge, 2006) may have contributed to students developing AE. Others believe that some professors may ask less of their students in terms of work ethic and quality for fear of receiving poor teacher reviews. This fear may then cause some professors to inflate grades (Lippmann, Bulanda, & Wagenaar, 2009). Additionally, some argue that American youth have been raised within a consumerism-focused society, which, once they arrive at college, may also influence them to act like a consumer towards their education (Edmunson, 1997). This might lead to a student expecting grades for payment.

Unfortunately, few studies have been published on how university faculty, staff, and/or students themselves may ameliorate the AE issue. Hoffman and Wallach (2007) found that volunteer work significantly reduced the level of self-entitlement for students. This is why the demographics questionnaire of this study asks students whether or not they participate in volunteer work. More research should be conducted on how to ameliorate the AE issue specifically.

### **Measures of AE**

A variety of measures have been created in order to assess AE. These assessments include Achacoso's (2002) Academic Entitlement Scale (AES), Chowning and Campbell's (2009) Academic Entitlement Scale (AE Scale), Greenberger et al.'s (2008) Academic Entitlement Scale (AE Scale), and Kopp et al.'s (2011) Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ). In order to understand the rationale behind choosing the AEQ scale for use in this study, the following is a brief overview and critique of each of the aforementioned assessments.

Achacoso (2002) developed a scale to assess AE, known as the Academic Entitlement Scale (AES). This scale included 12 self-report items that can be rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1, "Strongly Disagree," to 7, "Strongly Agree." This assessment was comprised of

two subscales, including Entitlement Actions and Entitlement Beliefs. Entitlement beliefs were assessed through the first five questions listed in the assessment (e.g., “Instructors should bend the rules for me”) while Entitlement actions were assessed through the last seven (e.g., “I would confront an instructor to argue about my grade”).

Kopp et al. (2011) criticized Achacoso’s (2002) AES by stating that although his literature review on AE was thorough, Achacoso did not adequately link the literature review to scale development. To be more specific, Kopp et al. desired more information on: Who should be able to take this assessment (college students, graduate students, etc.), the particular factor structure the researchers anticipated discovering through their research, as well as how Achacoso did not specify whether or not the assessment was used to ascertain particular dimensions of AE or just AE as a generalized construct.

Furthermore, Kopp et al. (2011) questioned whether or not this scale adequately assessed the population it measured, due to the absence of a final test of the final version, using a separate participant sample from the original. Additionally, Kopp et al. also made note of the discrepancy that in Achacoso’s study, participants with high levels of Entitlement Actions were more likely to engage in self-regulated learning strategies (e.g., using critical thinking skills). This finding is inconsistent with previous research on entitlement. Thus, Kopp et al. had a variety of concerns regarding Achacoso’s AES.

Chowning and Campbell (2009) also designed an AE assessment, the Academic Entitlement Scale (AE Scale). This assessment included 15 self-report items that could be rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1, “Strongly Disagree,” to 7, “Strongly Agree.” This assessment was comprised of two subscales, including Externalized Responsibility (ER) and Entitlement Expectations (EE). The ER subscale included 10 items that were designed to

measure the extent to which a person does not take responsibility for his or her actions. Items in this subscale included statements like, “For group assignments, it is acceptable to take a back seat and let others do most of the work if I am busy” (p. 985). The EE subscale included five items and was designed to assess a person’s beliefs about how professors should behave and assign grades. Items in this subscale included statements such as “Professors must be entertaining to be good” (p. 985).

Last, Kopp et al. (2011) disagreed with the approach utilized by Chowning and Campbell’s (2009) development of the AE Scale in numerous ways. Specifically, Kopp et al. believed that Chowning and Campbell might have mistakenly assessed not only the construct of AE, but rather, included items that overlapped with other constructs, such as work avoidance. They also took issue with how “the breadth of the AE construct was inadequately represented and the theoretical dimensions were not linked with the empirical domain” (p. 109). Furthermore, Kopp et al. did not agree with Chowning and Campbell’s choice of Principal Components Analysis and believed an Exploratory Factor analysis would have been more appropriate. Additionally, Kopp et al. believed that Chowning and Campbell did not adequately represent all possible entitlement expectations with their scale. Last, Kopp et al. did not look favorably upon the low reliability of scores derived from the EE subscale of the AE Scale.

Greenberger et al. (2008) also developed an AE-related scale, known as the AE Scale. This scale included 15 self-report items that could be rated from 1, “Strongly Disagree,” to 6, “Strongly Agree.” Scale questions included those such as, “A professor should be willing to lend me his/her class notes if I ask for them” (p. 1195) and “I would think poorly of a professor who didn’t respond the same day to an e-mail I sent” (p. 1196). Kopp et al. (2011) disagreed with the approach utilized by Greenberger et al. (2008) when developing their AE Scale.

Specifically, Kopp et al. argued that Greenberger et al. did not provide much information regarding how their assessment scales were developed. Kopp et al. also made note that, even though the AE Scale has strong internal consistency reliability, its scale structure has yet to be verified. Kopp et al. believed that the lack of this step calls into question the correlational analyses conducted with the AE Scale and other assessments (e.g., narcissism and entitlement assessments). Furthermore, Kopp et al. took issue with how the lack of a priori hypotheses may compromise the validity of the AE Scale.

### **The Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ)**

The problems associated with the three aforementioned AE assessments are what influenced Kopp et al. (2011) to develop their own AE questionnaire, called the Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ; 2011). The AEQ was developed using 2,097 freshmen from a medium-sized university in the southeastern US. For the purpose of establishing construct validity, Kopp et al. used the Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES; Campbell et al., 2004), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1989), Levenson's Locus of Control Scale (LOC; Levenson, 1973), Achievement Goal Questionnaire (AGQ; Finney et al., 2004), and the Student Opinion Scale (SOS; Thelk, Sundre, Horst, & Finney, 2009) when conducting their confirmatory factor analysis. Through their investigation, Kopp et al. found that there was a direct correlation between AEQ scores and work-avoidance, along with an inverse relationship between AEQ scores and test-taking effort.

Kopp et al. (2011) recommended that more research be conducted in the areas of academic success as well as on the utility of the AEQ. Kopp et al. also called for more research to be conducted on the developmental process of AE over the course of one's college years. The aim of this study is to continue Kopp et al.'s efforts by exploring the relationship between AE

scores and academic performance in both at-risk and non-at-risk college student populations. The results of this study may fill an important niche in the AE literature as well as provide information on the specific factors that may contribute to academic performance issues. Satisfaction with life is one factor, in particular, that is predicted to have a significant relationship with both academic performance and AE in this study.

### **Satisfaction with Life**

In addition to exploring AE and academic performance, this study also explored the concept of satisfaction with life in a college student population. A variety of research has been conducted on Millennials, specifically. For example, Twenge (2006) argued that Millennials face concerns such as high parent divorce rates, pressure to excel that is fueled by consumerism, as well as an increase in anxiety and depression. Twenge is not the only researcher who has questioned the stress levels that many Millennials may be experiencing. In relation to the number of traumatic events (i.e., the Oklahoma City Bombing tragedy, Columbine High School, and Virginia Tech shootings) that Millennials have been exposed to by media coverage, Jayson and Puente (2007) stated, “The Millennial Generation has every right to be the Melancholy Generation, and the wonder is that it’s not” (p. 1). Given these stressors, are Millennials at a greater risk for lower levels of life satisfaction? Hopefully this study will provide an answer to this question.

Satisfaction with life, as the name denotes, is defined as a cognitive appraisal of one's subjective well-being (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). This sense of well-being may also be considered as a cognitive evaluation of how content one is with his or her life. Life satisfaction can be measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), which was developed by Diener et al. (1985). The SWLS is comprised of five items that can be rated on a

seven-point Likert-type scale that ranges from 1, “Strongly Agree,” to 7, “Strongly Disagree.” Statements that can be rated include those such as “In most ways my life is close to my ideal,” “I am satisfied with life,” and “If I could live my life over I would change almost nothing” (p. 72).

Satisfaction with life has been researched in a variety of ways over time. Research indicates that experiencing stress and anxiety in college can have a negative influence on life satisfaction (Weinstein & Laverghetta, 2009), while factors such as having a strong sense of self-efficacy as well as having a good support system have been linked to higher levels of satisfaction with life (Coffman & Gilligan, 2003).

### **Satisfaction with Life, Academic Performance, and AE**

Several studies have been conducted on the relationship between satisfaction with life and academic performance; this suggests that expanding the study of the relationship between these two variables is warranted in conjunction with academic standing. Rode et al. (2005) conducted a study with business majors from a large university in the Midwestern US. They discovered that life satisfaction levels predicted the cumulative GPA for these participants. Dwyer (2008) explored the relationship between these two variables and found similar results, but used participants from a variety of different majors. Her study also took place in the Midwest, at a much smaller, private university. Chow (2005) conducted a study with participants at a Canadian university. Chow found that students who reported higher levels of life satisfaction also had higher GPAs. Although each of these researchers found similar results, their studies took place at geographical locations and with student populations unlike that of the current study. There may be significant differences in satisfaction with life for “at-risk” students unrelated to GPA.

Discovering whether or not there is a significant relationship between life satisfaction and

academic performance will contribute to the extant satisfaction with life literature. Dwyer (2008) emphasized the importance of discovering which factors in particular may contribute to a greater sense of subjective well-being, as subjective well-being can influence one's health for the better.

Furthermore, the relationships between academic performance, satisfaction with life, and AE variables have not yet been assessed. This study may help reveal the relationship between these three variables, for both academically at-risk and non-at-risk college student populations.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this correlational study was to explore the relationship between AE, academic performance, and satisfaction with life among college students. Academic standing was the independent variable explored, or whether or not a student is classified as either academically at-risk or non-at-risk. The dependent variables that were analyzed included level of AE, academic performance, and life satisfaction.

### **Summary**

This study may fill several important niches in the college student literature, including a better understanding of the relationship between AE and life satisfaction, AE and academic performance, as well as academic performance and life satisfaction between both academically at-risk and non-at-risk college students. The data acquired from this study regarding these relationships may help administrators, professors, academic advisors and counselors, as well as students themselves, develop a greater understanding of the relationship between AE, life satisfaction, and academic success during one's college career.

The next section will outline the specific methodology with which these relationships were investigated.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The methodology that was utilized in this study to explore the relationship between academic entitlement (AE), academic performance as measured by cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA), and satisfaction with life among college students will be explained in this chapter. The researcher will also examine differences in these areas between academically at-risk versus non-at-risk college students.

Chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation introduced the purpose of this study as well as summarized the literature that exists regarding AE, academic performance, and satisfaction with life for these two populations.

#### **Participants**

College student participants were recruited from a mid-sized public university in the Southern US. These participants were acquired using purposive convenience sampling, and were drawn from the group of students who were considered to be in either the academically at-risk or academically non-at-risk group. More specifically, this sample represented undergraduates who were either: 1) taking part in an intro to psychology course or 2) are taking part in a retention-based program, respectively.

Using the G-Power program (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009) to conduct the *a priori* analysis, it was estimated that 210 participants were needed in order to achieve adequate sample size for this study. This number was comprised of 105 participants for the academically at-risk group and 105 for the academically non-at-risk group. This estimate was based upon an

analysis ( $d = 0.50$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ , and power = 0.95) for a two-tailed independent samples t-test. Participants in this study were classified as either academically at-risk or academically non-at-risk based upon: 1) their participation in an academic readmission program or 2) non-participation in an academic readmission program. Those participating in an academic readmission program had less than a 2.0 cumulative GPA. Those who were considered to be academically non-at-risk were not participating in an academic readmission program and had at least a 2.0 cumulative GPA. This half-academically-at-risk, half-academically-non-at-risk combination provided a more diverse GPA data set than if only one group had been included in the study.

Participants from both groups were recruited using incentives. The academically at-risk group was offered extra credit for their participation, while the academically non-at-risk group received course assignment credit. These incentives were frequently offered as common practice in both of these courses, hence the reason for utilizing them in this study. Each participant was asked to complete the Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ; Kopp, Zinn, Finney, & Jurich, 2011) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The participants were also asked to complete a brief demographics questionnaire.

## **Instrumentation**

### **The Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ)**

The Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ; Kopp et al., 2011) is a self-report assessment that was designed to measure AE. The AEQ is comprised of eight items, which can be rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale that ranges from 1, “Strongly Disagree,” to 7, “Strongly Agree.” Statements included those such as, “I am a product of my environment. Therefore, if I do poorly in class, it is not my fault,” “It is the professor’s responsibility to make

it easy for me to succeed,” and “Because I pay tuition, I deserve passing grades” (pp. 125-126). The AEQ has been recognized as having desirable reliability (coefficient omega = .81, .84, Kopp et al., 2011;  $w = .83, .84$ , Kopp & Finney, in press) and validity ( $R^2$  for both samples varied between .21 and .60, Kopp et al., 2011;  $k = .29, p < .01$ , Kopp & Finney, in press).

### **The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)**

Life satisfaction can be measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), which was developed by Diener et al. (1985). The SWLS is comprised of five items that can be rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale that ranges from 1, “Strongly Disagree,” to 7, “Strongly Agree.” Statements include those such as, “In most ways my life is close to my ideal,” “I am satisfied with life,” and, “if I could live my life over I would change almost nothing” (p. 72). The SWLS has been shown to have discriminant ( $r = -.27$ , Vitaliano, Russo, Young, Becker, & Maiuro, 1991) and convergent validity ( $r = .82$ , Pavot, Diener, Colvin, & Sandvik, 1991), as well as a high degree of internal consistency reliability ( $\alpha = .87$ , Diener et al., 1985;  $\alpha = .89$ ). Test-retest reliability of the SWLS has varied, depending on the time frame (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Pavot et al. (1991) reported high test-retest reliability ( $\alpha = .84$ ) for one month.

### **Demographics Questionnaire**

The purpose of using a demographics questionnaire was to describe the participant sample, compare the representativeness of that sample to the overall college student population, as well as potentially use the information collected in post-hoc analyses to explore the existence of other relationships that were not included in the original research questions.

Utilization of the demographics questionnaire was helpful in gathering specific participant information including gender, ethnicity, college major, age, employment status, student athlete status, alcohol consumption, social support levels, academic performance as

measured by cumulative GPA, credit hours attempted, first generation college student, disability services, international or out-of-state, campus residence, volunteer work and fraternity or sorority membership status. The demographics questionnaire contained questions regarding the level of parents' education, annual household income level, as well as whether or not the student was considered to be academically at-risk or non-at-risk (e.g., whether or not the student was participating in a course geared towards student retention efforts). Few published studies address the categories mentioned above and their relationship to AE, thus, the purpose of gathering this information was to also identify potential areas of future research on AE.

Copies of the AEQ, SWLS and the demographics questionnaire are included in the Appendices.

### **Procedure**

IRB approval was sought and received prior to the start of this study. Once approval was acquired, the researcher contacted the retention program director and a psychology professor who conducts social science research in his laboratory with students at the selected university. Appointments were set with these individuals to not only discuss the purpose of this study but to also receive permission to use their students as research participants.

Once these individuals gave permission for their students to take part in this study a link to the assessments was distributed to participants in one of two ways. The students in the retention-based course received the link to the study via Blackboard, an online course management system. Once students logged onto Blackboard they were able to click on a link to Qualtrics. The psychology students were able to access the link through SONA, an online experiment management system that was utilized by all of the psychology instructors at the university. Once students read a description of the study they were able to click on a link to

Qualtrics. Qualtrics is an online data management system that contained the informed consent document, assessments, and demographics questionnaire of this study.

After entering into Qualtrics, participants were able to read the informed consent document. The informed consent document stated that a doctoral student was conducting this study as part of her dissertation requirements, that the data collected was kept confidential under double lock and key, and that participants had a right to terminate their role in the study at any time. Once participants read the informed consent document, they were able to click on a button that stated that they gave their permission to proceed with the study. Upon completion of the surveys and demographics questionnaire, the participants viewed a thank you statement from the researcher. The participants also received course assignment credit or extra credit, depending upon which class they were enrolled in and the type of incentive offered. The instructor of each course provided these incentives. The researcher acknowledged the specific students who took part in the study by providing their names and id numbers to the instructors, who could then allot course credit to their students.

After the participant data was collected, the researcher verified each participant's demographics questionnaire responses. The researcher confirmed the accuracy of this information using SAP, a student data management system. Student identification numbers were collected on the demographics sheet, which enabled the researcher to verify this information. The specific information that was verified included each participant's name, cumulative GPA, number of credit hours attempted, major, and whether the participant was taking either a psychology class or a retention-based course. This step was crucial, as some participants may have been unsure of this information (e.g., some participants may have forgotten how many credit hours they had taken).

## **Research Hypotheses**

Eight research hypotheses were explored in this study. The independent variable explored was academic standing, or whether or not participants were labeled as either academically at-risk or non-at-risk college students. The dependent variables that were explored included level of AE, academic performance as measured by GPA, and life satisfaction. The following questions were explored:

RQ1: Is there a significant difference between at-risk and non-at-risk students for AE?

H<sub>A1</sub>: A significant difference is expected between at-risk and non-at-risk college students for AE.

An independent samples t-test was utilized to assess whether or not there was a difference between at-risk and non-at-risk students for AE.

RQ2(a): Is there a significant relationship between academic performance and AE for non-at-risk students?

H<sub>A2</sub>(a): A significant correlation is expected between academic performance and AE for non-at-risk students.

A Pearson product-moment correlation was utilized to assess if there was a significant correlation between academic performance and AE for non-at-risk students.

RQ2(b): Is there a significant relationship between academic performance and AE for at-risk students?

H<sub>A2</sub>(b): A significant correlation is expected between academic performance and AE for at-risk students.

A Pearson product-moment correlation was utilized to assess if there was a significant correlation between academic performance and AE for at-risk students.

RQ3: Is there a significant difference between at-risk and non-at-risk students for satisfaction with life?

H<sub>A3</sub>: A significant difference is expected between non-at-risk and at-risk students for life satisfaction.

An independent samples t-test was utilized to assess if there was a difference between at-risk and non-at-risk students for life satisfaction.

RQ4(a): Is there a significant relationship between academic performance and satisfaction with life for non-at-risk students?

H<sub>A4</sub>(a): A significant correlation is expected between academic performance and life satisfaction for non-at-risk students.

A Pearson product-moment correlation was utilized to assess if there was a significant correlation between academic performance and life satisfaction for non-at-risk students.

RQ4(b): Is there a significant relationship between academic performance and satisfaction with life for at-risk students?

H<sub>A4</sub>(b): A significant correlation is expected between academic performance and life satisfaction for at-risk students.

A Pearson product-moment correlation was utilized to assess if there was a significant correlation between academic performance and life satisfaction for at-risk students.

RQ5(a): Is there a significant relationship between satisfaction with life and AE for non-at-risk students?

H<sub>A5</sub>(a): A significant correlation is expected between life satisfaction and AE for non-at-risk students.

A Pearson product-moment correlation was utilized to assess if there was a significant correlation between life satisfaction and AE for non-at-risk students.

RQ5(b): Is there a significant relationship between satisfaction with life and AE for at-risk students?

H<sub>A5</sub>(b): A significant correlation is expected between life satisfaction and AE for at-risk students.

A Pearson product-moment correlation was utilized to assess if there was a significant correlation between life satisfaction and AE for at-risk students.

### **Statistical Analyses**

The researcher utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for Windows (SPSS Inc., 2012) to carry out the statistical analyses in this study. The specific statistical methods included the independent samples t-test and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. When utilizing these tests, there was the assumption that data samples were randomly selected, independent of one another, and were protected when the researcher either eliminated or reduced the number of outliers. However, it is important to note that since participants were both purposively and conveniently sampled, not randomly selected, this chosen method may have modified the composition of the participant group in some capacity. This issue must be taken into account in the interpretation of the results of these calculations. Additionally, when using the Independent Samples t-Test, it was assumed that the dependent variable was either ratio- or interval-in-nature as well as continuous; the independent variable was categorical in nature and had two levels; that the dependent variable followed a normal distribution curve; there was homogeneity of variance, and that the participant sample was both adequate in size as well as equal between the groups (Rovai, Baker, & Ponton, 2013). When

utilizing the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, the researcher assumed that variables were either ratio- or interval-in-nature; followed a normal, bivariate distribution curve; had a linear relationship with one another, and that there was homoscedasticity in the data (Rovai et al., 2013).

### **Summary**

This chapter described the college student research participants who participated in this study as well as the instruments that were utilized by the researcher to assess these individuals. Specifically, the relationship between AE, academic performance as measured by GPA, and life satisfaction were the variables that were examined, both between and among academically at-risk and non-at-risk college students. This chapter also provided both the analyses and procedures that were implemented by the researcher.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### **Introduction**

Several relationships were investigated in this study, including the relationship between academic entitlement (AE), academic performance, and satisfaction with life, within a college student population. The Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and a demographics sheet were given to the participants in order to assess these relationships. The demographics questionnaire included items pertaining to age, gender, ethnicity, college major, employment status, student athlete status, alcohol consumption tendencies, levels of social support, academic performance as measured by cumulative GPA, credit hours attempted, first generation college student, utilization of student disability services, international or out-of-state, campus residence, volunteer work and fraternity or sorority membership status, level of parents' education, annual household income level, as well as whether or not the student was considered to be academically at-risk or non-at-risk (e.g., whether or not the student was participating in a course geared towards student retention efforts). The Independent Samples t-Test and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were utilized for the purpose of examining the data. The independent variable assessed was academic status (whether a student was considered to be academically at-risk or non-at-risk) while the dependent variables were AE, cumulative GPA, and satisfaction with life. The results of these analyses are discussed below.

## **Investigation of the Data**

Volunteers were obtained using purposive sampling and included undergraduates from a medium-sized public university in the Southeastern United States. Academically at-risk students were obtained through polling students in an academic readmission program while non-at-risk students were polled in an introduction to psychology course. Student identification numbers were checked to make sure a student did not take the survey twice, in case they were enrolled in both a psychology course and an academic readmission program course. If a student took the survey twice, his or her first set of scores were kept while the second set of scores were eliminated from the analysis. If students' cumulative resident GPA was 2.0 or above prior to the spring 2013 semester, their responses were placed in the academically non-at-risk category; if their GPA was below 2.0 then their responses were placed in the academically at-risk category.

From the data that was examined, the researcher found that there were a total of 385 responses from both groups – 204 from the academic readmissions group and 181 responses from the introductory psychology group. Not all of these responses were kept, however. Some responses had to be removed completely from the data, due to either the participant failing to complete the survey, taking the survey more than once, or as a result of not having a cumulative GPA (e.g., they were in the process of taking their first set of college classes). Additionally, data acquired from SAP revealed that some students who were taking the psychology course were actually academically at-risk students while some of the academic readmission program students were only taking the course for elective purposes and did not have a GPA below 2.0. Thus, the total number of responses actually included in the analysis was 146 from the psychology course and 165 from the academic readmission group.

## **Demographics Information and Descriptive Statistics**

A variety of results were found while utilizing the data acquired from the demographics questionnaire.

**Academically non-at-risk group: Self-report data.** The average age of the academically non-at-risk students was 19 years; 20.5% were male while 79.5% were female. In regards to ethnicity, 15.1% were African American, 0.7% Asian, 78.1% Caucasian, 2.1% Latino or Latina, 1.4% Middle-Eastern, and 2.7% reported themselves as something “other” than the aforementioned choices. Only 6.2% stated that they received accommodations at the University of Mississippi for a learning disability or learning disabilities and only 8.9% stated that they were a first generation college student.

Living arrangement status included how 82.9% of participants reported living on-campus, 17.1% living off-campus, and, of those living off-campus, only 12% mentioned living with relatives. The majority of non-at-risk students were from out-of-state, 54.1%, while 45.9% stated they were in-state students. No students claimed to be International students. Most participants did not maintain employment (76.7%), however 11.6% reported working 1-10 hours per week, 6.2% working 11-20 hours per week, 4.8% working 21-30 hours per week and only 0.7% working 31-40 hours per week.

Additionally, 58.9% respondents said they belonged to either a fraternity or sorority; only 2.7% reported being a SEC student athlete; and 99.3% reported having supportive friends or family. Many participants reported taking part in volunteer work on a regular basis, 46.6%, with the majority (26.7%) volunteering only 0-1 hours per week.

Furthermore, most academically non-at-risk males stated that they binge drink: 46.7% stated they binge drink 1-2 nights per week, 30% said 3-4 nights a week, while 23.3% denied

binge drinking at all. Most female participants reported abstaining from binge drinking (60.3%), although 31% said they binge drink 1-2 nights per week and 8.6% said 3-4 nights per week.

In regards to their mother's level of education, 0% of academically non-at-risk students stated that their mother received less than a high school diploma, 13.7% received a high school diploma or GED, 13.7% had some college experience, 6.2% received a 2-year college degree, 45.2% received a 4-year college degree, 4.8% had some graduate school experience, 15.8% received a graduate degree, and 0.7% said that this question did not apply to them (e.g., do not have a mother).

The level of education for the fathers of the academically non-at-risk students was also assessed: 0.7% of stated that their fathers received less than a high school diploma, 18.5% received a high school diploma or GED, 8.2% had some college experience, 5.5% received a 2-year college degree, 30.8% received a 4-year college degree, 2.1% had some graduate school experience, 32.2% received a graduate degree, 1.4% stated that this question did not apply to them (e.g., do not have a father), while 0.7% stated that they did not know the answer to this question.

Participants were also asked to estimate their parents' annual household income: 8.9% stated that they thought their parents made less than \$25,000, 10.3% between \$25,000 and 49,000, 11% between \$50,000-74,999, 13% from \$75,000-99,999, 14.4% from \$100,000-124,999, 8.2% between \$125,000-149,000, 7.5% stated \$150,000-199,000, and 26.7% said \$200,000 or more. These categories are described in Tables 1-3.

***Data obtained from SAP.*** Information was also acquired using the SAP data base on the school in which these participants' college major is housed: 2.7% came from the school of Accountancy, 23.3% School of Applied Sciences, 17.1% Business Administration, 3.4%

Education, 1.4% Engineering, 0.7% General Studies, 6.2% Health Related Professions, 4.1% Journalism, 37.7% Liberal Arts, and 3.4% Pharmacy. These results are displayed in Table 4.

SAP analyses also indicated that academically non-at-risk students had, as of fall 2013, a 3.05 mean cumulative GPA, with minimum scores of 2.0, maximum scores of 4.0, and a 0.59 standard deviation. Including the spring 2013 semester, participants, on average, had attempted 39.9 credit hours, with a minimum of 24, maximum of 165 and standard deviation of 23.17. Completed resident hours that incorporated the spring 2013 semester were also assessed. These analyses indicated that, on average, academically non-at-risk students earned a minimum of 19, maximum of 158, mean of 38.52 and standard deviation of 21.06 credit hours.

**Academically at-risk group: Self-reported data.** The average age of the academically at-risk students was 22.05 years; 59.4% were male while 40.6% were female. In regards to ethnicity, 30.3% were African American, 2.4 % Asian, 61.8% Caucasian, 0.6% Latino or Latina, 0.6% Middle-Eastern, and 4.2% reported themselves as something “other” than the aforementioned choices. Only 7.9% of at-risk students stated that they receive accommodations at the university for a learning disability or learning disabilities and 18.8% stated that they are a first generation college student.

Living arrangement data included how 13.9% of participants reported living on-campus, 86.1% living off-campus, and, of those living off-campus, only 9.9% mentioned living with relatives. Most academically at-risk students reported being in-state residents (72.1%), while 27.3% were out-of-state students and only 0.6% International students. Most students said that they did maintain employment (52.1%), and, of those who were employed, 7.3% stated they worked 1-10 hours per week, 16.4% said 11-20 hours, 15.8% reported 21-30 hours, 7.3% said 31-40 hours, and only 1.2% reported working more than 40 hours per week. Additionally,

25.5% respondents said they belonged to either a fraternity or sorority, 4.2% were a Southeastern Conference (SEC) student athlete, and 93.9% reported having supportive friends or family. The majority of participants stated that they do not complete volunteer work on a regular basis (77.6%), while 7.9% devote 0-1 hours per week, 12.1% donated 2-4 hours per week, 1.2% participated in 5-7 hours, and 1.2% reported completing eight or more hours a week. Additionally, 39.8% of males denied regular binge drinking habits, 48% reported bingeing 1-2 nights, and 12.2% reported 3-4 nights of binge drinking per week. Most females reported not being binge drinkers (59.7%), while 29.9% stated that they binge drink 1-2 nights per week, 9% said 3-4 nights per week, and 1.5% said 5-7 nights per week.

In regards to their mother's level of education, 4.2% of academically at-risk students stated that their mother received less than a high school diploma, 18.2% received a high school diploma or GED, 17% had some college experience, 12.1% received a 2-year college degree, 30.3% received a 4-year college degree, 3% had some graduate school experience, 13.9% received a graduate degree, while 1.2% stated that they did not know the answer to this question.

The level of education for the fathers of the academically-at-risk students was also assessed: 7.9% of academically at-risk students stated that their father received less than a high school diploma, 20.6% received a high school diploma or GED, 15.2% had some college experience, 7.9% received a 2-year college degree, 24.2% received a 4-year college degree, 1.2% had some graduate school experience, 15.2% received a graduate degree, 1.8% stated that this question did not apply to them (e.g., do not have a father), and 6.1% stated that they did not have the knowledge with which to answer the question.

Participants were also asked to estimate their parents' annual household income. 14.5% stated that they thought their parents made less than \$25,000, 18.8% between \$25,000 and

\$49,000, 13.3% between \$50,000-74,999, 9.7% from \$75,000-99,999, 15.8% from \$100,000-124,999, 3.6% between \$125,000-149,000, 7.3% stated \$150,000-199,000, and 17% said \$200,000 or more. More information regarding this data is provided in Tables 1-3.

***Data obtained from SAP.*** Through SAP data analysis, it was discovered that 3% of academically at-risk participants came from the School of Accountancy, 7.9% School of Applied Sciences, 25.5% from Business Administration, 3.6% Education, 7.3% Engineering, 1.2% General Studies, 6.1% Health Related Professions, 5.5% Journalism, 39.4% Liberal Arts and 0.6% Pharmacy. These results are depicted in Table 4.

SAP analyses also indicate that academically at-risk students had, as of fall 2013, a 1.52 mean cumulative GPA, with minimum scores of 0.0, maximum scores of 1.99, and a 0.46 standard deviation. Including the spring 2013 semester, participants, on average, had attempted 76.62 credit hours, with a minimum of 24, maximum of 198 and standard deviation of 34.92. Completed resident hours were also assessed and incorporated the spring 2013 semester. These analyses indicated that, on average, academically at-risk students earned a minimum of 3, maximum of 165, mean of 57.84 and standard deviation of 30.71 credit hours.

Table 1

*A comparison of Academically At-Risk (AR) Versus Non-At-Risk (NAR) College Student Groups for Demographic Variables of Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Living Arrangement, Residency, Employment, Fraternity/Sorority Membership, Student Athlete, Volunteer Work, and Binge Drinking Status*

Demographic Variable	AR N	NAR N	AR %	NAR %
Age	22.05	19.08	---	---
Gender				
Male	98	30	59.4	20.5
Female	67	116	40.6	79.5
Ethnicity				
African American	50	22	30.3	15.1
Asian	4	1	2.4	0.7
Caucasian	102	114	61.8	78.1
Latino/a	1	3	0.6	2.1
Middle-Eastern	1	2	0.6	1.4
Other	7	4	4.2	2.7
Living Arrangement				
Live on-campus	23	121	13.9	82.9
Live off-campus	142	25	86.1	17.1
Residency				
In-state	119	67	72.1	45.9
Out-of-state	45	79	27.3	54.1
International	1	0	0.6	0
Fraternity/Sorority Member				
Yes	42	86	25.5	58.9
No	123	60	74.5	41.1
Employment Status				
Yes	79	34	52.1	23.3
No	86	112	47.9	76.7
Student Athlete Status				
Yes	7	4	4.2	2.7
No	158	142	95.8	97.3
Volunteer Work				
Yes	37	68	22.4	46.6
No	128	78	77.6	53.4
Binge Drinking				
Males who binge drink	59	23	60.2	76.7
Females who binge drink	27	46	40.3	39.6

Table 2

*A comparison of Academically At-Risk (AR) Versus Non-At-Risk (NAR) College Student Groups for Demographic Variables of Social Support Status, Mother's and Father's Level of Education and Annual Household Income*

Demographic Variable	AR N	NAR N	AR %	NAR %
<b>Social Support Status</b>				
Yes	155	145	93.9	99.3
No	10	1	6.1	0.7
<b>First Generation College Student</b>				
Yes	31	13	18.8	8.9
No	134	133	81.2	91.9
<b>Mother's Level of Education</b>				
Less than a high school diploma	7	0	4.2	0
High school diploma/GED	30	20	18.2	13.7
Some college experience	28	20	17	13.7
2-year college degree	20	9	12.1	6.2
4-year college degree	50	66	30.3	45.2
Some graduate school experience	5	7	3	4.8
Received a graduate degree	23	23	13.9	15.8
Non-Applicable	0	1	0	0.7
Do not know	2	0	1.2	0
<b>Father's Level of Education</b>				
Less than a high school diploma	13	1	7.9	0.7
High school diploma/GED	34	27	20.6	18.5
Some college experience	25	12	15.2	8.2
2-year college degree	13	8	7.9	5.5
4-year college degree	40	45	24.2	30.8
Some graduate school experience	2	3	1.2	2.1
Received a graduate degree	25	47	15.2	32.2
Non-Applicable	3	2	1.8	1.4
Do not know	10	1	6.1	0.7
<b>Annual Household Income</b>				
Less than \$25,000	24	13	14.5	8.9
\$25,000-49,000	31	15	18.8	10.3
\$50,000-74,999	22	16	13.3	11
\$75,000-99,999	16	19	9.7	13
\$100,000-124,999	26	21	15.8	14.4
\$125,000-149,000	6	12	3.6	8.2
\$150,000-199,000	12	11	7.3	7.5
\$200,000 or more	28	39	17	26.7

Table 3

*A Comparison of Academically At-Risk (AR) Versus Non-At-Risk (NAR) College Student Groups for Demographic Variables of Resident Cumulative GPA, Number of Credit Hours Completed and Attempted*

Demographic Variable	AR	NAR
<b>Resident Cumulative GPA</b>		
Mean	1.52	3.05
Minimum	0.00	2.00
Maximum	1.99	4.00
Standard Deviation	0.46	0.59
<b>Resident # of Credit Hours Attempted</b>		
Mean	76.62	39.90
Minimum	24	24
Maximum	198	165
Standard Deviation	34.92	23.17
<b>Resident # of Credit Hours Completed</b>		
Mean	57.84	38.52
Minimum	3	19
Maximum	165	158
Standard Deviation	30.71	21.06

Table 4

*A Comparison of Academically At-Risk (AR) Versus Non-At-Risk (NAR) College Student Groups for Major Department Status*

Department	AR N	NAR N	AR %	NAR %
Accountancy	5	4	3	2.7
Applied Sciences	13	34	7.9	23.3
Business Administration	42	25	25.5	17.1
Education	6	5	3.6	3.4
Engineering	12	2	7.3	1.4
General Studies	2	1	1.2	0.7
Health Professions	10	9	6.1	6.2
Journalism	9	6	5.5	4.1
Liberal Arts	65	55	39.4	37.7
Pharmacy	1	5	0.6	3.4

## **Analysis of the Data**

Several hypotheses were explored in this study. The results of each hypothesis will be discussed below.

**Hypothesis one.** A significant difference was expected between academically at-risk and non-at-risk college students for AE. An independent samples t-test was utilized to assess this relationship. The statistical analysis revealed that there was a significant difference,  $t(309)=-2.610$ ,  $p=.009$ , between academically at-risk and non-at-risk students for AE. Non-at-risk students scored lower ( $M=25.47$ ,  $SD=6.69$ ) than at-risk students ( $M=27.59$ ,  $SD = 7.58$ ) on AE. Confidence intervals were fairly narrow and ranged from -0.52 to -3.73.

Table 5

*A Comparison of Academically At-Risk (AR) Versus Non-At-Risk (NAR) College Student Group Scores on the Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)*

Instrument	AR				NAR			
	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
AEQ	27.59	7.58	8	45	25.47	6.69	8	40
SWLS	20.52	6.71	5	33	24.51	6.10	9	35

**Hypothesis two.** A significant correlation was expected between academic performance and AE for non-at-risk students. A Pearson product-moment correlation revealed that there was not a significant correlation between these two variables,  $r = -.101, p > .05$ . Details about these results are provided in Table 6.

**Hypothesis three.** A significant correlation was expected between academic performance and AE for academically at-risk students. A Pearson product-moment correlation analysis revealed that there was not a significant correlation between these two variables,  $r = .048, p > .05$ . Table 6 contains more information regarding these results.

**Hypothesis four.** A significant difference was expected between non-at-risk and at-risk students for life satisfaction. An Independent Samples t-Test indicated that there was a significant difference between these groups,  $t(309) = 5.465, p = .000$  for satisfaction with life. Non-at-risk students scored higher ( $M=20.52, SD=6.71$ ) than at-risk students ( $M=24.51, SD = 6.10$ ) on the SWLS. Confidence intervals ranged from 2.55 to 5.43.

**Hypothesis five.** A significant correlation was expected between academic performance and life satisfaction for non-at-risk students. A Pearson product-moment correlation revealed that there was a significant correlation between these two variables,  $r = .215, p < .01$ . Please refer to Table 6 for these results.

**Hypothesis six.** A significant correlation was expected between academic performance and life satisfaction for at-risk students. A Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was utilized and revealed that there was not a significant correlation between these two variables,  $r = .027, p > .05$ .

**Hypothesis seven.** A significant correlation was expected between life satisfaction and AE for non-at-risk students. A Pearson product-moment correlation

analysis indicated that there was not a significant correlation between these two variables,  $r = -.100, p >.05$ . Table 6 illustrates these results.

**Hypothesis eight.** A significant correlation was expected between life satisfaction and AE for at-risk students. A Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted and showed that there was not a significant correlation between these two variables,  $r = -.125, p >.05$ . Please see Table 6 for more details regarding these results.

Table 6  
*Pearson Product Moment Correlation Scores for Independent Variable of Group, Academically At-Risk (AR) Versus Non-At-Risk (NAR) and Dependent Variables of AE, Cumulative GPA, and Satisfaction with Life*

Variable	AR	NAR
AE & Resident Cumulative GPA	0.048	-0.101
AE & Satisfaction with Life	-.125	-.100
Satisfaction with Life & Resident Cumulative GPA	.027	.215**

\*\* Level of significance,  $p < .01$ , 2-tailed test

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The goal of every college student is to obtain a bachelor's degree, yet only 36% of college students at public universities and 54.7% of private college attendees actually graduate within a 5-year time frame (ACT, 2012). This statistic suggests that acquiring a "four-year degree" is not without its challenges for many students. Furthermore, as graduating from college is dependent on maintaining specific university grade requirements, many faculty and staff would naturally be interested in knowing the crucial factors that are related to maintaining an adequate grade point average (GPA). Currently, few studies have been published on the relationship between academic performance, academic entitlement (AE), and life satisfaction among college students. The results of this dissertation study will hopefully aid many university personnel in understanding how these variables relate specifically to academic performance.

The purpose of this correlational study was to examine the relationship between academic entitlement (AE), academic performance, and satisfaction with life using college student participants. This participant sample was acquired from a public university in the southern US and was divided into two groups – those who were considered to be academically at-risk versus those who were considered to be academically non-at-risk. The dependent variables that were explored included AE, cumulative GPA, and satisfaction with life, while the independent variable was academic standing or whether the participant was considered to be either an academically at-risk or non-at-risk student. The independent samples t-test and the Pearson's

Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used to analyze eight research hypotheses. The results of these analyses are discussed in detail below.

## **Research Hypotheses and Results**

### **AE and Academic Standing**

To begin, the researcher predicted that there would be a significant difference between academically at-risk and non-at-risk college students for AE. An independent samples t-test was utilized to explore this relationship. The results of this study show that academically at-risk students scored significantly higher on AE than non-at-risk students. Taking into consideration the literature that has been written on AE, one could arrive at the conclusion that these results indicate that academically at-risk students may, therefore, be more likely to maintain and express academically entitled beliefs and behaviors than non-at-risk students.

According to Kopp et al.'s (2011) conceptualization of AE, academically entitled students believe that they have a right to an education and that this process should not be taxing; that their instructors are in charge of disseminating information to them, thereby making the students passive learners; that issues which arise in learning are not the students' fault but instead, are the fault of the institution, educators, etc.; that students should be given the power to amend course policies created by their professors; and, last, that they are owed certain grades since they are paying for their education. The results of the current study indicate that academically at-risk students may be more likely to maintain these AE-laden beliefs.

Additionally, some researchers (Chowning & Campbell, 2009) propose that AE is linked to uncivil student behaviors. Mellor (2011) conceptualized such behaviors as expressing boredom in class, acting in a rude or angry manner towards the instructor, speaking at inappropriate times with classmates or talking on the phone, sleeping, exiting the classroom

without permission, using technology inappropriately, and/or trying to negotiate higher grades with the instructor in a discourteous fashion. The current study sheds light on the issue that academically-at-risk students may be more inclined to participate in such behaviors than their non-at-risk peers.

No matter whether a student is considered to be academically at-risk-or non-at-risk, however, academically entitled student behaviors can be a cause of concern for faculty and staff who truly want to help students navigate their way successfully through college. Furthermore, knowing that academically at-risk students may have a greater likelihood of being academically entitled could help university personnel focus AE-reduction behavior strategies more frequently on academically-at-risk student groups than on non-at-risk students. Additionally, universities may also want to offer AE-related coping strategy workshops for faculty and staff who are unsure of how to work with academically entitled students.

### **AE and Academic Performance**

Next, the researcher predicted for the second and third hypotheses that there would be a significant correlation between academic performance and AE for both academically at-risk and non-at-risk students. A Pearson product-moment correlation was employed to assess these relationships. Results indicate that there was no significant relationship between GPA and AE for either group. These results were similar to Greenberger et al. (2008)'s, although, unlike their participants, the current sample was comprised mainly of Caucasian students. Several potential explanations exist as to why no significant relationship was found between GPA and AE.

**AE is an effective coping strategy used to inflate grades.** To begin, AE may be a coping strategy used more frequently by academically at-risk students in an attempt to protect their GPA. This strategy would make sense, as students with higher grades would not

necessarily need to negotiate grades with their instructors as frequently as academically at-risk students. Academically at-risk students, however, may feel as though they are dangerously close to not getting the grades that they need to graduate or even remain at the university for an extended period of time. Intense negotiations may be effective in persuading professors to give into demands made by such students. As Lippmann, Bulanda, and Wagenaar (2009) suggested, some instructors may even inflate student grades in an effort to maintain positive teaching evaluations. Thus, AE may be an effective coping strategy for students attempting to get their academic needs of a higher GPA met. This strategy may therefore decrease the GPA gap between academically at-risk and non-at-risk students, making it seem as though there is no relationship between AE and GPA when, in fact, it may actually just be hidden by grade inflation.

**AE is an *ineffective* coping strategy used to try to inflate grades.** Alternatively, one could explain the insignificant relationship between AE and GPA as meaning that AE and GPA are actually not related. Although some students attempt to negotiate higher grades with their instructors, this does not mean that their attempts are effective in increasing their grades substantially. Instructors may witness AE-related opinions and behaviors but refuse to give into these students' demands. This would indicate that, although persistent, academically entitled students are not effective in negotiating higher GPA's. If this explanation is true, students may benefit from being informed that this strategy is ineffective. Perhaps being educated on how AE is defined and expressed in the classroom may help some students realize that this behavior is not actually helpful in increasing their GPA.

It is important to consider, however, that a crucial piece to this AE-GPA relationship is that professors are in charge of changing student grades. Knowing whether or not professors

agree to increase grades more frequently for academically entitled students could help researchers further explore whether or not there is a significant relationship between AE and GPA in the future.

**AE is a coping/identity-protection strategy.** Another potential explanation of the lack of significant relationship between AE and GPA could be that AE-related attitudes and beliefs are related less to GPA expectations, but rather, to students wanting to “save face” by preserving a more positive identity. This identity preservation strategy may be important not just to protect how the students are perceived by others, but also to themselves. In other words, perhaps AE is really related more to self-confidence and self-esteem issues and less to one’s grades. This idea is supported by the results of previous studies. For example, Greenberger et al. (2008) found that AE was associated with low self-esteem. Falling below important university GPA standards may make academically at-risk students in particular feel embarrassed, distressed, or angry about their own academic performance. Instead of giving into those negative feelings, however, academically entitled students may attempt to turn either their own attention or their instructors’ away from this issue by placing blame elsewhere. This would make sense, as research shows that Millennials in particular feel tremendous pressure to succeed (Twenge, 2006).

Additionally, one may want to consider Kopp et al.’s (2011) discovery that those who score higher on AE are also more likely to have an external locus of control. With external locus of control having been linked to low self-esteem in previous research (de Man & Devisse, 1987), it may be the case that those who are more academically-entitled feel that they have less control over their grades. When these grades are threatened, the academically entitled students attribute their low grades to an entity outside of themselves, such as their instructor or university. Thus,

AE could be a strategy that appears to be used by individuals solely for grades but actually is a “mask” worn to protect themselves from feeling insecure and powerless.

Interestingly, Baer and Cheryomukhin (2011) found the opposite of Greenberger et al. (2008). Baer and Cheryomukhin found that students who scored higher in AE also scored higher on measures of self-esteem. If the academically at-risk, more academically-entitled student group members actually do have higher self-esteem, then the results of the current study could mean that being academically entitled is more of a reaction to not getting what they feel is owed to them. In any case, the results of the current study could suggest that AE may not truly be just a strategy to negotiate higher grades, but rather, could be an abrasive form of stress coping or identity preservation.

Obviously there is more territory that should be explored between the research areas cited above. The discrepancy between Greenberger et al.’s (2008) and Baer and Cheryomukhin’s (2008) results as well as the results of the current study indicate that the relationship between AE, self-esteem, external locus of control, and GPA warrant further exploration.

### **Satisfaction with Life and Academic Standing**

The fourth research hypothesis explored in this study involved examining whether there was a significant difference between academically non-at-risk and at-risk students for life satisfaction. An independent samples t-test was employed for the purpose of assessing this relationship. Following the definition of satisfaction with life (Diener et al., 1985), results from the current study show that academically at-risk students appraise themselves as being less happy with their lives than non-at-risk students. One may consider several explanations as to why these results may have occurred.

First, Weinstein and Laverghetta (2009) conceptualized satisfaction with life as being hindered by stress and anxiety. With the possibility of not being able to stay in school or graduate, academically at-risk students may have a greater tendency to feel stressed or anxious, which could decrease their life satisfaction levels. Looking beyond purely GPA and its relationship to being happy with one's life, however, it does appear that, in general, academically at-risk students are less satisfied than their non-at-risk peers.

Another explanation as to why there is a significant difference between academically at-risk versus non-at-risk students in satisfaction with life is that other factors outside of academics may be contributing to these students' dissatisfaction. These life events can include major life stressors such as a death in the family, financial or relationship problems, etc. These stressors were not assessed in the current study but could potentially provide one more piece of the puzzle for future researchers. Furthermore, understanding what could be contributing to these student's lower levels of life satisfaction could be helpful for faculty and staff who want to help students grow in this area.

Furthermore, previous research indicates that having a helpful and caring social support system may increase the likelihood of finding life satisfaction (Coffman & Gilligan, 2003). The results of the present study indicate that, as a whole, fewer academically at-risk students reported having adequate social support than the academically non-at-risk students - 93.9% versus 99.3%. These statistics indicate that a great majority of students from both groups are receiving social support; however, from these results it appears that academically at-risk students still feel less supported socially than their non-at-risk peers. At-risk students may benefit from additional social support programs than what is already offered by the university. These opportunities, may, in turn be helpful for at-risk students in developing a healthier sense of well-being.

Last but not least, Coffman and Gilligan (2003) also highlighted the importance of self-efficacy to one's satisfaction with life. One may intuit that academically at-risk students, having not been successful in school, may be more likely to have less confidence in their own abilities than non-at-risk students. This lack of self-confidence may, therefore, be related to their likelihood of feeling less satisfied with themselves. Future research may need to be conducted in this area in order to establish an empirical connection between self-efficacy and satisfaction with life in an academically at-risk student population. Furthermore, providing referrals to the University Counseling Center, as well as providing counseling services and/or self-efficacy enhancing exercises by appropriately-trained retention staff may be an important way of helping academically at-risk students reach their full potential.

### **Satisfaction with Life and GPA**

Next, the researcher predicted for the fifth hypothesis that a significant correlation would be found between academic performance and life satisfaction for non-at-risk students. A Pearson product-moment correlation was utilized to explore this dynamic. Results show that there was, indeed, a significant positive correlation between these two variables for non-at-risk students. Inspecting the previous literature written on this topic, it seems that these results coincide well with previous findings.

A variety of studies have been published on the relationship between satisfaction with life and academic performance. Rode et al. (2005) studied business majors who were enrolled in a Midwestern University. These researchers found that cumulative GPA could be predicted by satisfaction with life scores. Dwyer (2008) also assessed this relationship and achieved similar findings. Dwyer, however, utilized a sample comprised of students from multiple majors, and at a small, private institution of higher education. Additionally, Chow (2005) found a relationship

between satisfaction with life and GPA in a Canadian student sample. Much like the current research and its academically non-at-risk student sample, the aforementioned researchers found that those who are more satisfied with life also appear to have higher GPAs.

The sixth hypothesis involved looking at whether or not a significant relationship between academic performance and satisfaction with life exists for academically at-risk students. A Pearson product-moment correlation was used to assess this area. Results from the current study indicate that, unlike their non-at-risk counterparts, academically at-risk students did not have a significant relationship between academic performance and satisfaction with life. This finding is also contrary to the aforementioned literature where college students, in general, were assessed for this relationship. There may be a variety of explanations as to why this may have occurred.

First, academically at-risk students may not associate their satisfaction with life overall as being related to their GPA or, furthermore, their career as a college student; instead, areas of their lives outside of their academic performance may be related to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life. Previous research that has been conducted on the topic illustrates how lower academic performance has been linked to stressful personal issues, work responsibilities, as well as family obligations (Trombley, 2000). Thus, it may be the case that academically at-risk students are more likely to be experiencing stressors outside of school that are associated with not only a lower GPA but also with lower life satisfaction.

Alternatively, one may posit that academically non-at-risk students are not entirely immune to life circumstances. Perhaps both academically at-risk versus non-at-risk students experience similar life stressors; it is just that certain students are less effective in coping with these stressors. As a result, those who handle life's challenges less effectively could potentially

fall into the academically at-risk category. Future research should be conducted to see if this is truly the case.

The results of these analyses are important to consider, as knowing which specific college student groups are more likely to have a lower sense of subjective well-being could potentially help researchers, as well as current educators, develop a greater understanding of how to help students who are struggling both emotionally and academically. Furthermore, knowing that there is no significant relationship between GPA and satisfaction with life for academically at-risk students could provide a strong push towards future research being conducted on how to ameliorate the factors that are actually related to lower satisfaction with life levels and academic performance issues for this particular student group. Specific variables such as personal stressors, family obligations, and employment status, for example, may be two important places to begin.

### **Satisfaction with Life and AE**

Both the seventh and eighth research hypotheses involved looking at whether or not a significant relationship between satisfaction with life and AE would be discovered, for both academically at-risk and non-at-risk college student samples. A Pearson product-moment correlation procedure was utilized to assess these relationships. Results indicate that there was no significant correlation between satisfaction with life and AE in either sample.

One explanation as to why this result may have occurred is, quite simply, that students who are either content or discontent with their lives can express AE-related attitudes. Just because some students believe that they are consumers of their education and have specific “rights” as students does not mean that they are people who are generally dissatisfied. The

current study is the first to explore the relationship between satisfaction with life and AE, which makes these findings an important addition to the literature.

### **Demographic Variables and Future Directions**

In addition to the analyses and results discussed above, it may be important for future researchers as well as the faculty and staff who work with college students on a regular basis to consider the demographic variables of gender, socioeconomic status, parent education level, first generation student status, and major of the students who participated in this study. These demographic variables have been discussed in relationship to AE, satisfaction with life, and GPA in previous literature. The results from the current study will contribute to the literature already in existence, and in ways discussed below.

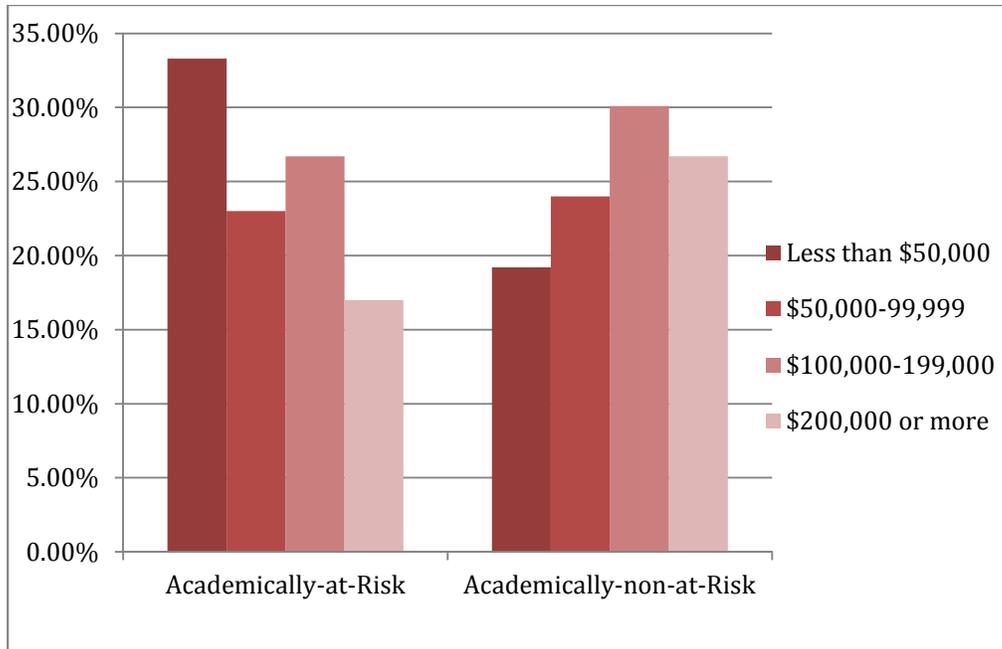
#### **Gender**

The results of the present study indicate that the academically at-risk group was composed of 59.4% males and 40.6% females, while the non-at-risk group was composed of 79.5% females and 20.5% males. Not coincidentally, perhaps, the academically at-risk group was significantly more academically entitled than the non-at-risk group, which mimics Hartman's (2012) research. Hartman found that males tend to be more academically entitled than females. This result may mean that AE is not actually correlated so much with academic status as it is with gender. Future analyses should be conducted in order to assess the relationship between AE and gender in both academically at-risk versus non-at-risk students.

#### **Socioeconomic Status**

Edmunson (1997) speculated that having a consumer-driven mindset may be related to expressing academically-entitled beliefs while in college, however, results of the current study indicate that the more academically-entitled, academically at-risk group reported having a lower

annual household income than its non-at-risk counterparts. These results are illustrated in Figure 1, on the following page.



*Figure 1.* A comparison of academically at-risk versus non-at-risk students’ self-reported household income.

The most frequently reported annual household income for non-at-risk students was \$100,000-199,999, quite a wealthy sample, while the most frequently reported annual household income for at-risk students was less than \$50,000. Furthermore, 26.7% of non-at-risk students reported having a household income of \$200,000 or more, while only 17% of at-risk students reported this level. These statistics indicate that having more income may not necessarily be related to being more academically entitled.

Alternatively, this result could potentially mean that those with fewer financial resources are more likely to dispute grades. This would indicate that money spent towards tuition is a high commodity, one that should be protected by those who have to “make their tuition dollars count.” Thus, it is not yet known if AE is illustrated more frequently by those with fewer

financial resources but should be explored in future research in order to either confirm or reject this hypothesis.

### Parent Education Level and First Generation Students

Parent education level and first generation student status information was also acquired from participants in the current study. Results show that 65.8% of non-at-risk students reported having a mother who received a 4-year degree or higher, while 47.2% of at-risk students reported this status. Furthermore, 65.1% of non-at-risk students reported having a father who received a 4-year degree or higher, while 40.6% of at-risk students reported this. Additionally, the academically at-risk student group contained more than twice the number of first generation students than the non-at-risk group. These results are illustrated in Figure 2:

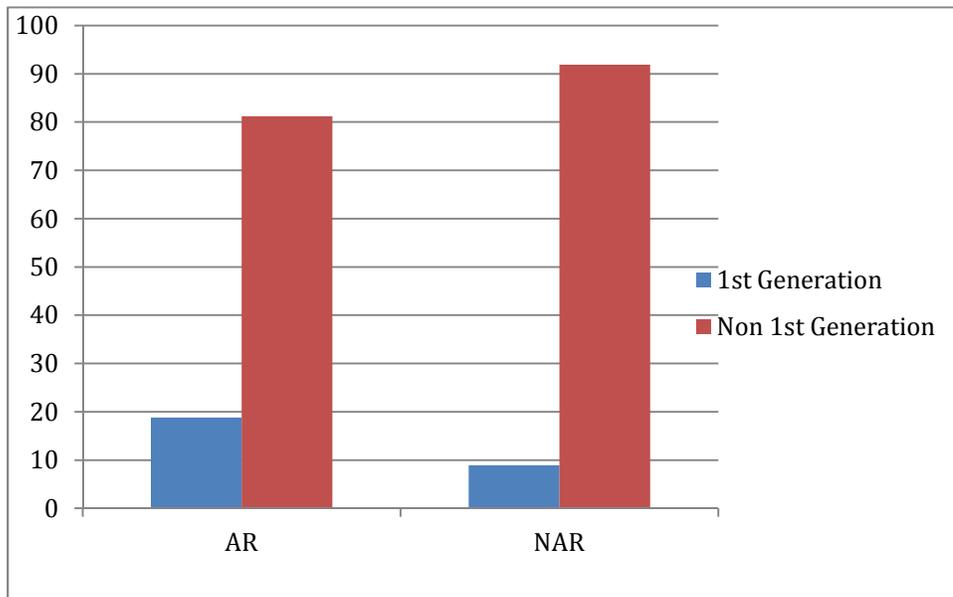


Figure 2. Percentages of academically at-Risk (AR) Versus Non-at-Risk (NAR) College Student Self-Report of First Generation Student Status.

These statistics indicate that, as a whole, parents of academically at-risk students also appear to have less education than those of the non-at-risk student group members and that, furthermore, many of the academically at-risk students are those who are the first in their family to go to college. Future analyses should be conducted in order to see what relationships exist between these variables, AE, satisfaction with life, and GPA.

### **Limitations**

The findings from this study should be interpreted with caution, as there are several potential limitations to these results. First, the participants who took part in this study were from just one university, located in the Southern US. These students may have had their own particular qualities that make the results less applicable to other college student groups. Another potential limitation to this research is how participants willingly volunteered to take the assessments. This tendency to volunteer may also mean that these students have other qualities that could influence the results in ways that are unknown to the researcher.

Next, the data that was acquired for this study entailed using self-report procedures. This process may be inherently problematic, as some participants may be unwilling to report their accurate thoughts and feelings. These fears may be due to either not wanting to be perceived as either dissatisfied with their lives or being academically entitled. Furthermore, participants may be afraid that they are actually dissatisfied or unhappy if they respond a certain way to the questionnaires, so this fear may then influence them to want to score a certain way on the assessments.

Fourth, course-related credits were offered to the participants by the researcher to take part in this study. This incentive may have attracted students to the study who may not have participated otherwise.

Fifth, the average age of both participant groups should be considered when pondering these results. The average age of the academically at-risk group was 22 while the average age for the non-at-risk group was 19. These ages would mean that the majority of these participants are considered to be Millennials or students who were born between the years of 1982 and 2009 (Alexander & Sysko, 2011). Therefore, the results of this study may not be found in other participant groups, such as those comprised of non-traditional aged students. Future research should be conducted to see if these results also apply to other, specific age groups.

Last, even though the AEQ (Kopp et al., 2011) has been shown to be both valid and reliable (Kopp et al., 2011; Kopp & Finney, in press), this assessment is still a relatively new assessment of AE.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

As discussed in the previous section, the results of the current study indicate that future research should be conducted on the areas of AE, satisfaction with life, and academic performance while comparing academically at-risk to non-at-risk college students. An exploration of specific topics to consider will be discussed below. Understanding how these concepts relate to one another could help other faculty, staff, and even college students themselves begin to understand how these concepts are related as well as the importance of developing interventions for specific populations.

To begin, these results indicate that academically at-risk students may have a greater tendency toward expressing academically-entitled beliefs than non-at-risk students. This information is valuable in that it can provide a foundation for educators and other university personnel to begin developing education programs that are geared towards reducing AE-behaviors in academically-at-risk student populations specifically. These programs may take the

form of either workshops for faculty and staff who are unsure of how to work with academically entitled students, as well as educating college students themselves in how AE is defined and conceptualized as being quite negative.

Second, the results from this study indicate that the relationship between AE and GPA is still nebulous. If AE truly is an effective strategy in negotiating higher GPA's, then it would be beneficial for students to receive education to this effect. Unfortunately, it is not yet possible to draw the conclusion that AE is unrelated to GPA. Future research should be conducted not only on AE and its relationship to GPA, but also on whether or not instructors actually inflate grades when encountering academically entitled students. Knowing the professor's exact role in AE could provide a missing piece to this puzzle.

Next, a discrepancy was found between Greenberger et al.'s (2008) and Baer and Cheryomukhin's (2008) analysis of the relationship between AE and self-esteem. Are students who score high in AE also more likely to have high self-esteem? Furthermore, are academically at-risk students scoring higher on AE assessments due to low self-efficacy levels or an external locus of control? These ambiguities highlight the importance of exploring the relationship between AE, external locus of control, self-esteem, and academic performance in the academically at-risk population.

Fourth, results of this study indicate that academically at-risk students could be struggling with lower levels of life satisfaction than their non-at-risk peers, and that, furthermore, their well-being may not be related to their academic performance. Conducting additional research on what could be causing lower levels of satisfaction with life in this particular population may help retention program personnel as well as other faculty and staff members begin to better understand how to help these students grow not only academically but also emotionally.

Specifically, future researchers may want to focus on the relationship between satisfaction with life, self-efficacy, social connectedness, and stress coping. It may also be helpful for researchers to explore how stress, family responsibilities, and working outside of school may not only influence GPA but also one's satisfaction with life.

Last, but not least, the results of this dissertation indicate that important demographic variables should be explored in future studies. Data was gathered on gender, parental education, household income, major, and first generation student status. As these variables were not included in the original research hypotheses, future researchers may want to consider how these demographic variables are correlated to AE, satisfaction with life, and academic performance.

### **Conclusion**

The current study has highlighted the importance of developing a greater understanding of academically entitled students, particularly the academically at-risk population. Knowing that academically-at-risk students are struggling not only academically but also emotionally can help educators and university personnel realize that these students, in particular, are in great need of support and encouragement, two qualities in particular that can be demonstrated by trained retention program personnel. Furthermore, knowing that some of these academically at-risk students may be wearing a "mask" – a quality that appears to be AE but could potentially be something deeper - may also illuminate the need to understand these individuals on a deeper level than purely a stereotypical label of being "entitled, low performing students". Future research should be conducted on AE, Satisfaction with Life, and their relationship to stress coping, external locus of control, self-efficacy, social connectedness, and specific demographic variables. Conducting additional research on these variables could help university faculty and staff understand how to help academically at-risk students, in particular, reach their full potential.

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## LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:  
EMAILS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Academic Entitlement Study Emails/Announcements

We will be advertising our study via class announcements and emails sent through Blackboard. Both announcements and emails will be directed toward students in EDHE 202 and an Intro to Psychology Class.

### **SONA Announcement:**

We are conducting a study on academic entitlement, academic performance, and satisfaction with life in a college student population. If you are currently an undergraduate student at the University of Mississippi, we would like for you to complete a couple of brief surveys along with a demographics questionnaire. This should take about 20 minutes. You are not obligated to take part in this study. If you have decided to take part in our study, please follow this link: [http://uofmississippi.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_79h12ljtzFqMoLj](http://uofmississippi.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_79h12ljtzFqMoLj) and read the Informed Consent document. Thank you for your time and consideration!

### **Rebekah Reysen, Dr. Degges-White, Dr. Susan Mossing, & Dr. Matthew Reysen**

After advertising the study via Blackboard and class announcements, a link to the study will be posted on Blackboard for students who have not yet taken the assessments. On the homepage of each course (if applicable) the following description will be displayed, along with the link to the study:

### **Blackboard Announcement:**

We are conducting a study on academic entitlement, academic performance, and satisfaction with life in a college student population. If you are currently an undergraduate student at the University of Mississippi, we would like for you to complete a couple of brief surveys along with a demographics questionnaire. A description of our study, along with our contact information, is attached. As written on the attachment, you are not obligated to take part in this study. If you have decided to take part in our study, please follow this link: [http://uofmississippi.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_6l46kAfDBptEQFD](http://uofmississippi.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_6l46kAfDBptEQFD) and read the Informed Consent document. Thank you for your time and consideration!

Rebekah Reysen, Dr. Degges-White, Dr. Susan Mossing, & Dr. Matthew Reysen

### **In-Class Announcement**

A study is being conducted on academic entitlement, academic performance, and satisfaction with life in a college student population. If you are currently an undergraduate student at the University of Mississippi, we would like for you to complete a couple of brief surveys along with a demographics questionnaire. A description of our study, along with our contact information, is located on Blackboard. As written on Blackboard, you are not obligated to take part in this study. If you have decided to take part in our study, please follow the link that is specified on Blackboard. Thank you for your time and consideration!

Rebekah Reysen, Dr. Degges-White, Dr. Susan Mossing, & Dr. Matthew Reysen

APPENDIX B:  
INFORMATION LETTER

## Information Letter

### **The Relationship between Academic Entitlement, Academic Performance, and Satisfaction with Life in a College Student Population**

#### **Investigators**

Rebekah Reysen, M.Ed.  
Center for Excellence in Teaching &  
Learning  
215 Hill Hall  
(662) 915-2352

Dr. Susan Mossing  
Center for Excellence in Teaching &  
Learning  
106 Hill Hall  
(662) 915-5312

Dr. Matthew Reysen  
Department of Psychology  
310C Peabody Hall  
(662) 915-3461

#### **Advisor**

Dr. Suzanne Degges-White  
Department of Leadership & Counselor  
Education  
142 Guyton Hall  
The University of Mississippi  
(662) 915-1946

#### **Description**

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between academic entitlement, academic performance, and satisfaction with life. If you choose to participate, you will take the Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ; Kopp, Zinn, Finney, & Jurich, 2011), the Satisfaction with Life scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), and a demographics questionnaire. Altogether it may take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete these assessments.

If you choose to participate, you will first read and sign an Informed Consent document on a computer. After signing the Informed Consent document, you will take the AEQ, SWLS, and fill out a demographics questionnaire using Qualtrics, a data management and storage program.

This study is being conducted in order to fulfill dissertation requirements of the first author.

#### **Risks and Benefits**

We do not think that there are any risks to participating in this study other than spending approximately 15-20 minutes of your time.

#### **Cost and Payments**

The Academic Entitlement Questionnaire will take about 5 minutes to complete. It will also take

approximately 5 minutes to complete the Satisfaction with Life Scale and about 10 minutes to complete the demographics questionnaire. There are no other costs for helping us with this study. There are no payments to taking part in this study other than course-related credits.

**Confidentiality**

You will not need to put your name on your questionnaire, just your student ID number. All student questionnaires will be kept confidential under double lock and key. Questionnaire results will only be used for education and/or research purposes.

**Right to Withdraw**

You do not have to take part in this study. If you start the study and decide that you do not want to finish, all you have to do is to tell one of the researchers (see above) in person, by letter, or by telephone. Whether or not you choose to participate or to withdraw will not affect your standing with your instructor, the Department of Counselor Education, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, or with the University. It will not cause you to lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

**IRB Approval**

This study has been reviewed by The University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and can be found under Protocol 13-066. The IRB has determined that this study fulfills the human research subject protections obligations required by state and federal law and University policies. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact the IRB at (662) 915-7482.

APPENDIX C:  
INFORMED CONSENT

## Informed Consent

### **The Relationship between Academic Entitlement, Academic Performance, and Satisfaction with Life in a College Student Population**

#### **Investigators**

Rebekah Reysen, M.Ed.  
Center for Excellence in Teaching &  
Learning  
215 Hill Hall  
(662) 915-2352

Dr. Susan Mossing  
Center for Excellence in Teaching &  
Learning  
106 Hill Hall  
(662) 915-5312

Dr. Matthew Reysen  
Department of Psychology  
310C Peabody Hall  
(662) 915-3461

#### **Advisor**

Dr. Suzanne Degges-White  
Department of Leadership & Counselor  
Education  
142 Guyton Hall  
The University of Mississippi  
(662) 915-1946

#### **Description**

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between academic entitlement, academic performance, and satisfaction with life. You will take the Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ; Kopp, Zinn, Finney, & Jurich, 2011), the Satisfaction with Life scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), and a demographics questionnaire. Altogether it may take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete these assessments.

You will first read and sign an Informed Consent document on a computer. After signing the Informed Consent document, you will take the AEQ, SWLS, and fill out a demographics questionnaire using Qualtrics, a data management and storage program.

This study is being conducted in order to fulfill dissertation requirements of the first author.

#### **Risks and Benefits**

We do not think that there are any risks to participating in this study other than spending approximately 15-20 minutes of your time.

#### **Cost and Payments**

The Academic Entitlement Questionnaire will take about 5 minutes to complete. It will also take approximately 5 minutes to complete the Satisfaction with Life Scale and about 10 minutes to complete the demographics questionnaire. There are no other costs for helping us with this study. There are no payments to taking part in this study other than course-related credits.

**Confidentiality**

You will not need to put your name on your questionnaire, just your student ID number. All student questionnaires will be kept confidential under double lock and key. Questionnaire results will only be used for education and/or research purposes.

**Right to Withdraw**

You do not have to take part in this study. If you start the study and decide that you do not want to finish, all you have to do is to tell one of the researchers (see above) in person, by letter, or by telephone. Whether or not you choose to participate or to withdraw will not affect your standing with your instructor, the Department of Counselor Education, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, or with the University. It will not cause you to lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

**IRB Approval**

This study has been reviewed by The University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and can be found under Protocol 13-066. The IRB has determined that this study fulfills the human research subject protections obligations required by state and federal law and University policies. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact the IRB at (662) 915-7482.

**Consent**

By clicking on the button below, I certify that I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the information outlined above regarding this study. I hereby give my consent to authorize the University of Mississippi to evaluate or assist as needed. I have had the opportunity to discuss any questions regarding the above information.

APPENDIX D:  
SURVEYS, SCORING GUIDELINES,  
AND DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

The Academic Entitlement Questionnaire  
(AEQ; Kopp, Zinn, Finney & Zurich, 2011)

The following items are asking about your personal attitudes about the college experience. Not all students feel the same way or are expected to feel the same way. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. Just answer honestly.

Please respond by indicating how much you agree or disagree with each statement using the response options 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree

\*\*\*\*\*

1. If I don't do well on a test, the professor should make tests easier or curve grades.
2. Professors should only lecture on material covered in the textbook and assigned readings.
3. Because I pay tuition, I deserve passing grades.
4. If I am struggling in a class, the professor should approach me and offer to help.
5. If I cannot learn the material for a class from lecture alone, then it is the professor's fault when I fail the test.
6. I should be given the opportunity to make up a test, regardless of the reason for the absence.
7. I am a product of my environment. Therefore, if I do poorly in class, it is not my fault.
8. It is the professor's responsibility to make it easy for me to succeed.

AEQ Scoring Guidelines  
(Kopp, Zinn, Finney & Zurich, 2011)

Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ) – Total score for items 1-8 – measures academic entitlement, or “the expectation that one should receive certain positive academic outcomes (e.g., high grades) in academic settings, often independent of performance” (Kopp et al., 2011). No items are reverse scored.

For further psychometric information and validity evidence, see:

Kopp, J. P., Zinn, T. E., Finney, S. J., & Jurich, D. P. (2011). The development and evaluation of the Academic Entitlement Questionnaire. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, 44*, 105-129.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale  
(SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985)

DIRECTIONS: Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number in the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Slightly Disagree
- 4 = Neither Agree or Disagree
- 5 = Slightly Agree
- 6 = Agree
- 7 = Strongly Agree

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The conditions of my life are excellent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I am satisfied with life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

## Demographics Questionnaire

Student ID # \_\_\_\_\_

### Please answer the following questions.

1. Are you:

Male

If you are a male, how many nights a week do you binge drink? Binge drinking is defined as consuming 5 or more alcoholic beverages in one evening.

Female

If you are a female, how many nights a week do you binge drink? Binge drinking is defined as consuming 4 or more alcoholic beverages in one evening.

2. What is your ethnicity?

African American

Asian

Caucasian

Latino/a

Middle-Eastern

Other

3. Do you live:

On-campus

Off-campus

If off-campus, do you live with your family?

Yes

No

4. Are you currently listed as an:

In-state student

Out-of-state student

International Student

5. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Are you currently employed?

Yes

If yes, how many hours a week do you work? \_\_\_\_\_

No

7. Do you belong to a fraternity or sorority? (Are you a member of the Greek system?)

Yes

No

8. Are you a Southeastern Conference (SEC) student athlete? (This does **not** include participating in intramural sports.)

Yes

No

9. Do you have supportive friends or family?

Yes

No

10. What is your cumulative GPA?

0.00-0.99

1.00-1.99

2.00-2.99

3.00-4.00

11. How many credit hours have you **attempted**? \_\_\_\_\_

0-30

31-60

61-90

91-120

More than 120

12. How many credit hours have you **completed**, NOT just attempted? \_\_\_\_\_

0-30

31-60

61-90

91-120

More than 120

13. Do you receive accommodations at the University of Mississippi for a learning disability or learning disabilities?

- Yes
- No

14. Are you a first generation college student? A first generation college student is the first person in their family to attend college, a university, community college, or technical school.

- Yes
- No

15. What is your mother's level of education?

- Less than a high school diploma
- Received high school diploma/GED
- Some college experience
- Received a 2-year college degree
- Received a 4-year college degree
- Some graduate school experience
- Received a graduate degree
- Non-Applicable
- Do not know

16. What is your father's level of education?

- Less than a high school diploma
- Received high school diploma/GED
- Some college experience
- Received a 2-year college degree
- Received a 4-year college degree
- Some graduate school experience
- Received a graduate degree
- Non-Applicable
- Do not know

17. Please estimate your parents' annual household income:

- Less than \$25,000
- \$25,000-49,999
- \$50,000-74,999
- \$75,000-99,999
- \$100,000-124,999
- \$125,000-149,999
- \$150,000-199,999
- \$200,000 or more

18. Are you currently enrolled in:

- EDHE 202
- EDHE 202 Contractual Readmission Program
- Neither
- Do not know

19. Do you participate in volunteer work on a regular basis?

Yes

-If yes, please estimate the number of hours per week that you do volunteer work:

No \_\_\_\_\_

20. In which department is your major housed?

- Accountancy
- Applied Sciences
- Business Administration
- Education
- Engineering
- General Studies
- Health Professions
- Journalism
- Liberal Arts
- Pharmacy

VITA

**REBEKAH HOLMES REYSEN, M.Ed., NCC**

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**EDUCATION**

- Ph.D. in Counselor Education** **December 2013**  
University of Mississippi  
University, Mississippi, CACREP Accredited
- M.Ed. in Counselor Education** **August 2007**  
University of Mississippi  
University, Mississippi, CACREP Accredited
- B.A.'s in Psychology & Theatre (Acting), History Minor** **May 2001**  
Purdue University - West Lafayette, Indiana

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

- Instructor of Record**  
**EDHE 101 Academic Skills for College** **Spring 2013-Present**  
Presented course curriculum and group work around topics of studying strategies, career development, and stress management for freshmen on probation.
- EDHE 105 Freshman Experience** **Fall 2012-Present**  
Created and implemented course curriculum around the topics of studying strategies, campus resources, stress management, and diversity.
- Co-Instructor of Record** **Spring 2013-Present**  
**EDHE 101 Academic Skills for College, 35 sections**  
Contributed to developing the curriculum of EDHE 101 and overseeing operations of the course.

**Counselor Education Co-Instructor**

**Psychopharmacology**

COUN 595

**May 2011**

Developed and conducted class presentations on how mental illness can be treated using psychotropic medications.

**Counseling Skills**

COUN 692

**Summer 2011**

Led discussion and counseling skills training sessions for master's students in counselor education. In charge of assessing and providing feedback on counseling skills videos.

**Career Counseling**

COUN 680

**Fall 2011**

Contributed to the development and execution of class presentations on career counseling. Managed the operations of a hybrid course for both Oxford and University of Mississippi branch campuses, including overseeing online course assignments and assessments.

**Teacher's Assistant**

**Intro to Cognitive Psychology**

PSY 200

**Fall 2001**

Advised approximately 50-75 students while contributing to running an undergraduate psychology class. Responsible for holding office hours, grading exams and quizzes, as well as organizing, analyzing, summarizing, and maintaining student grades.

**COUNSELING & SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE**

***Ctr for Excellence in Teaching & Learning, University of Mississippi, University, MS***

**Learning Specialist**

**March 2012-Present**

Coordinated 35 sections of EDHE 101, a course geared towards providing academic assistance to freshman on probation. This included overseeing the operations, grading, and instruction of approximately 400-500 students and 17 instructors. Also contributed to the operations of EDHE 202, a course established for the purpose of helping academically at-risk students thrive both personally and academically. This included running group supervision meetings and answering questions of EDHE 202 students and counselors. Additionally, conducted training sessions with a variety of departments on campus for peer tutor and peer mentor training. Last, acted as a consultant to a variety of students seeking assistance with academic and/or personal issues.

**EDHE 202 Supervisor**

**August 2011-Present**

Supervised 14 counselors who helped college students at risk of academic dismissal. Responsible for maintaining accurate supervision files, tracking supervisee progress, as well as delivering and evaluating counseling skills assessments. Contributed to enhancing supervisees' counseling skills.

**EDHE 202 Counselor and Group Facilitator****August 2010-Present**

Lead and co-lead groups of students who were at risk of academic dismissal, as well as seeing this same population of clients for individual counseling sessions. Responsible for maintaining accurate files, tracking student progress, as well as delivering and evaluating assessments. Served as liaison between clients and other departments on campus. Contributed to enhancing student study and stress management skills. Stayed up-to-date with policies and regulations of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and the University of Mississippi.

**Communicare, Oxford, MS****School Therapist****August-December 2009**

Conducted individual, group, and family counseling sessions for elementary school students diagnosed with mental illness. Participated in emergency on-call duty for the mental health agency. Coordinated efforts of teachers and administrators in helping children in the classroom with behavioral problems. Enhanced client coping skills on an academic and interpersonal level.

**University of Mississippi, University, MS****EDHE Counselor and Group Leader****August 2006-May 2007**

In charge of leading and co-leading groups of students who were at risk of academic dismissal, as well as seeing this same population of clients for individual counseling sessions. Responsible for maintaining accurate files, tracking student progress, as well as delivering and evaluating assessments. Served as liaison between clients and other departments on campus. Contributed to enhancing student study and stress management skills. Stayed up-to-date with policies and regulations of the Academic Support Center and the University of Mississippi.

**Counselor, BASICS Program, University Counseling Center August 2006-May 2007**

Responsible for seeing at-risk clients and helping them explore their current, as well as healthier behaviors around alcohol and drug use. Conducted sessions with over 150 clients. In charge of press release activities for the BASICS program. Responsible for accurate record and note-keeping activities.

**Outreach Programmer****August 2005-May 2006**

Responsible for researching and presenting various topics such as stress management and abusive relationships, for the purpose of educating students across the University of Mississippi campus. Disseminated valuable information on career development, such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator.

**Counselor-in-Training, Emergency Intakes****August 2005-May 2006**

Acted as emergency intake counselor for the University Counseling Center. Aided with crisis situations through conducting intake sessions and consulting with supervisors

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### University of Mississippi, University, MS

#### **Program Evaluation Team Member**

**January 2012-May 2013**

Contributed to developing the University of Mississippi's Department of Leadership and Counselor Education Handbook and Assessment Manual. Created and/or revised assessments to be utilized by students and faculty of the department. These assessments followed the Committee for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) standards.

#### **Director of Public Relations, Graduate Student Council**

**August 2006-May 2007**

Responsible for advertising GSC activities through various modalities, including e-mail, fliers, and newspaper advertisements, as well as coordinating a GSC booth at the Union and sending out holiday cards. Events advertised included coffee breaks, Senate meetings, GSC socials, Graduate Women's Group activities, and the VITA Tax-Assistance Program.

#### **Cancer Walk/Run Coordinator**

**January 2005-May 2006**

Coordinated the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Jean Jones Memorial Walk/Run for Cancer. Contributed to raising over \$5,000, with profits donated to cancer patients and the Jean Jones Memorial Scholarship Fund. Boosted and supervised the operations of the race, including conducting committee meetings, public relations activities used to promote the event, networking with local community members and organizations, obtaining donations from local organizations, establishing race protocol and schedule, as well as acquiring local celebrities to take part on race day. Leveraged ticket sales, race participant numbers, as well as money obtained for both the Baptist Hospital Cancer Institute and the Jean Jones Memorial Scholarship Fund.

### Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN

#### **Editor/Secretary/Grader**

**July 2002-June 2004**

In charge of grading statistics homework assignments. Responsible for editing and maintaining technical reports and documents, as well as editing and distributing recommendation letters. Managed and supervised the operations of undergraduate student workers.

#### **Psychobiology & Memory Researcher**

**August 2000-May 2001**

Wrote and developed a 35-page honors senior thesis that contributed to the understanding of eating behavior and weight gain. Responsible for collecting and maintaining data, utilizing statistical programs to find significant effects, illustrating this data using graphing software, and documenting findings, references, and abstract. Contributed to potential publications in scientific journals through collecting and analyzing experimental data for both memory and psychobiology laboratories.

## PUBLICATIONS

### **Refereed Journals**

Shifron, R., & Reysen, R. H. (2011). Workaholism: Addiction to work. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 67(2), 136-146.

Stoltz, K. B., Barclay, S., Reysen, R., & Degges-White, S. (2013). Counselors-in-Training and Career Construction: The Use of Occupational Images in Clinical Supervision. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 52*, 2-14.

Stoltz, K. B., Reysen, R. H., Wolff, L. A., & Kern, R. M. (2009). Lifestyle and the Stages of Change in weight loss. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 65*, 69-85.

Winburn, A., Niemeyer, S. R., & Reysen, R. (2012). Mississippi Principals' Perceptions of Cyberbullying. *Delta Journal of Education, 2*(2), 1-15.

Young, T. L., Reysen, R., & Eskridge, T., & Ohrt, J. H. (2013). Personal growth groups: Measuring outcome and evaluating impact. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 38*, 52-67.

### **Submitted for Review**

Reysen, R. & Degges-White, S. (submitted for review). Using Career Construction Theory in a Changing Job Market.

Rogers, T., Snow, M., Reysen, R., Winburn, A., & Mazahreh, L. (submitted for review). The Self of the Counselor: Exploring Adult Attachment Styles in Counselors-in-Training.

### **Book Chapters**

Michael, T., Turnage-Butterbaugh, I., Reysen, R. H., Hudseph, E., & Degges-White, S. (2012). When learning is "different": Readin', Writin', and 'Rithmetic and Giftedness? In S. Degges-White & B. Colon. *Counseling Boys and Young Men* (pp. 59-72). New York, NY: Springer.

### **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

Mississippi Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors	2013
Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision	2013
Mississippi Counseling Association	2011-Present
Mississippi Counseling Association Specialists in Group Work	2011-Present
Mississippi Vocational Counselor's Association	2011–Present
Mississippi Career Development Association	2011-2012
National Career Development Association	2012
American Counseling Association	2010

### **PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS**

Mazahreh, L., Reysen, R. H., Rogers, T., & Winburn, A. (2011, April). Adult Attachment Styles for Counselors in Training. Delta State Conference. Cleveland, MS.

Reysen, R., H., Mazahreh, L., Rogers, T., Winburn, A., & Stoltz (2011, November). Adult Attachment Styles for Counselor Educators in Training. Mississippi Counseling Association

Conference. Biloxi, MS.

Rogers, T., Reysen, R., Winburn, A., Mazahreh, L., & Cole, J. (2011, September). On-Site Practicum Supervisor Training Workshop. Sponsored by the Department of Leadership and Counselor Education, University of Mississippi, University, MS.

Stoltz, K. B., Reysen, R., & Barclay, S. (2011, March). Using Career Construction Counseling in Counselor Supervision. American Counseling Association Conference. New Orleans, LA.

Stoltz, K. B., Reysen, R., & Martindale, J. (2006, November). Combating Mississippi's obesity epidemic: Using the Transtheoretical Model of Change: Mississippi Counseling Association, Choctaw, MS.

Stoltz, K. B., Van der Vyver, V. M., & Reysen, R. (2007, May). The Work Life Task: Integrating Adlerian Ideas Into Career Development Counseling. Illinois Career Development Association Conference: Peoria, IL.

Stoltz, K. B., Van der Vyver, V. M., & Reysen, R. (2007, July). The Work Life Task: Integrating Adlerian Ideas Into Career Development Counseling. National Career Development Association Annual Conference: Seattle, WA.

## SERVICE

### Committee Membership

Retention Subcommittee for the Growth Management Strategic Plan	2013
Doctoral Program Evaluation Team	2012
Tutorial Coordinator Hiring Committee	2012
Graduate Student Council	2006-2007

### Leadership

President, MCA Specialists in Group Work	2012-2013
Editorial Review Board Member, <i>JCRP</i>	2011-Present
President, MCDA	2011-2012
President-Elect, MCA Specialists in Group Work	2011-2012
ACA Weblog Writer	2010

### Publications

Reysen, R. (2012, September). Peer Tutor Program. In the University of Mississippi's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning's *EMantle*.

Reysen, R. (2012, October). Working with Academically At-Risk Students. In the University of Mississippi's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning's *EMantle*.

Reysen, R. (2012, November). Tools to Incorporate Into the Classroom. In the University of Mississippi's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning's *EMantle*.

Reysen, R. (2013, February). Peer Tutor Program. In the University of Mississippi's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning's *EMantle*.

Reysen, R., & Wiggers, N. (2013, March). Kickstarting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Half of your semester. In the University of Mississippi's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning's *EMantle*.

Rogers, T., Reysen, R., Winburn, A., Mazahreh, L., & Cole, J. (2012). University of Mississippi's Department of Leadership and Counselor Education Handbook.

Rogers, T., Reysen, R., Winburn, A., Mazahreh, L., & Cole, J. (2012). University of Mississippi's Department of Leadership and Counselor Education Assessment Manual.

### **Presentations**

Reysen, R. (2013, June). Learning Styles. Sponsored by the University of Mississippi's Fed Ex Student Athletic Academic Support Center's Tutor Training Program.

Reysen, R. (2012, August). Peer Mentoring. University of Mississippi's Honors College Peer Mentor Training.

Reysen, R. (2012, August). Learning Styles. Sponsored by the University of Mississippi's Fed Ex Student Athletic Academic Support Center's Tutor Training Program.

Reysen, R. (2012, October). Stress Management for mentors and mentees! University of Mississippi's Peer Mentor Training for Fast Track Peer Mentors.

Reysen, R. (2012, November). Motivation – What contributes to it and how to maintain it! University of Mississippi's Peer Mentor Training for Fast Track Peer Mentors.

Reysen, R., & Wiggers, N. (2012, August). Strategies for online Students. Sponsored by the University of Mississippi's Master's in Health Administration Orientation Program.

Reysen, R., & Wiggers, N. (2012, May). Overview of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Sponsored by the University of Mississippi's GEAR UP! Program.

Wiggers, N., & Reysen, R. (2012, August). Learning styles and strategies. Sponsored by the University of Mississippi's Peer Tutor Training for FedEx Student Athletic Academic Support Center' Peer Tutor Program.

Wiggers, N., & Reysen, R. (2012, November). Working with academically at-risk students. Workshop Sponsored by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

Wiggers, N., & Reysen, R. (2012, September). Time and stress management. Workshop Sponsored by Kappa Alpha Theta.

## AWARDS

Invitation to join Gamma Beta Phi	2013
Invitation to join Phi Delta Kappa	2013
Outstanding Master's Student Research Award <i>Counselor Education Program, University of Mississippi</i>	2007
Who's Who Among American Colleges and Universities Inductee	2007
Phi Kappa Phi Inductee	2006
Jean Jones Memorial Scholarship Recipient, <i>University of Mississippi</i>	2005-2007
Nominee for the Crouse Scholarship and Internship <i>Professional Writing Program, Purdue University</i>	2003

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

College Counseling  
Academic Entitlement  
Career Construction Counseling  
Workaholism  
Group Counseling & Therapeutic Factors  
Counseling & Attachment Styles

## REFERENCES

References are available upon request.