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Academic Dishonesty: The Ghost of Papers Past

Wayne T. Whitmore

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In

Sociology

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Academic Dishonesty: The Ghost of Papers Past
Wayne T. Whitmore, Ed.D

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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ABSTRACT

This research project examined student's acts of academic dishonesty and their beliefs regarding whether acts of academic dishonesty were acceptable through survey research conducted online at a two-year college and a four-year university in the Minnesota State (MinnState) system in southern Minnesota. This research aimed to build on existing research related to academic dishonesty in higher education. The sample included 195 students enrolled at a two-year comprehensive college and a four-year state university. Outcomes indicated a majority of students engaged in acts of academic dishonesty. Second, outcomes indicated men are more likely to engage in academic dishonesty than women. Third, outcomes indicated younger students were more likely to engage in academic dishonesty than older students. Finally, outcomes indicated a belief academic dishonesty is a legitimate means of achieving good grades.

Academic Dishonesty: The Ghost of Papers Past

Introduction

When I first started researching for this project on academic dishonesty, I could not help but think of the philosophical concept of consequentialism. Consequentialism postulates that whether an act is right or wrong morally is a function of the results or the outcome of said act (Kamm 1992). In other words, if a student benefits from acts of academic dishonesty without getting caught, they may well view it as having been the right decision. Does this imply the act is wrong only if one is caught? What if your morals are a bit slippery? What happens if you do it and get away with it the first time you try? In this thesis, I explain the problem of academic dishonesty, examining the topic through a variety of sociological lenses, and report my research findings.

Breadth of the Problem

Academic dishonesty is sometimes the subject of news headlines. A *Las Vegas Review-Journal* story on December 2, 2014 reported the University of Nevada-Las Vegas fired a professor for plagiarizing the works of 18 different people (McCabe 2016). Earlier, in September of 2014, the *Arizona Daily Star* reported an Assistant Professor at the University of Arizona was reprimanded for plagiarizing the work of one of her students (Alaimo 2016). Flash forward to February 2015 when the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* reported on a Minnesota college president being investigated for alleged plagiarism of her dissertation (*Pioneer Press* 2016), and a subsequent article in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

which reported that two college presidents were being investigated for alleged plagiarism regarding their dissertations (Lerner 2016). In 2012, Harvard College investigated, and subsequently forced out approximately 70 students for academic dishonesty on a take-home final exam (Perez-Pena 2016). Stanford University reported in March 2015 the University was looking into reports of possible large-scale academic dishonesty among students in introductory courses (Seipel 2016).

It is not just people in the academic world who cheat. Such dishonesty occurs in the business and public sector job markets as well. Volkswagen cheated to pass emissions testing at the state and federal levels by programming computers in cars to run certain programs at certain times (Hotten 2015). Wells-Fargo cheated for profit on the backs of their clientele by opening bogus accounts of different types in their names (Egan 2017). Twenty-five law enforcement officers were caught cheating on a promotional exam in Riverside, California (Kelman 2018). Up to 50 people either cheated or helped applicants cheat on firefighter examinations in Los Angeles (*Los Angeles Daily Review* 2015). FBI agents, including those in supervisory roles, were found by the Justice Department to have cheated on a promotional exam (Sherman 2010). Teachers and administrators were caught and convicted of racketeering and other charges in relation to a scandal involving organized cheating on standardized tests in an Atlanta school district (Strauss 2015). It goes on and on, from cops and agents and teachers to bus drivers and retail workers; dishonesty seems to be rife in the

public and private job sectors. This discussion leads to the question of why people engage in acts of academic dishonesty, and what can be done to slow or stop the tide of cheating.

Academic dishonesty in higher education affects all in academia. Historically, research from Drake (1941) found almost 25 percent of students reported cheating in some way or another. As reported by Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff, and Clark (1986), cheating is pervasive in both secondary and post-secondary education. The phenomenon continues today, as more recent research that indicates growth in the post-secondary arena is a contributing factor to academic dishonesty (Bennett 2010; Heckler, Forde, and Bryan 2013).

Academic dishonesty is, however, not black-and-white. When does one cross the line, what needs to be cited and how, what is open-source material, and what is considered to be “public knowledge” are all issues that can and often do lead to plagiarism and outright intellectual theft. Outright cheating occurs on tests and assignments. Another issue regarding academic dishonesty is outsourcing your work: websites sell completed papers, or advertise their services in writing a customized and original paper that fits your parameters. This begs the question of what exactly is academic dishonesty?

How does this impact those carrying out academic dishonesty? According to the Open Education Database (OEDB), research conducted at Fordham University indicated a significant gap existed between those who cheated and their non-cheating counterparts, with cheaters averaging a GPA of 3.41 versus a

GPA of only 2.85 for non-cheaters (OEDB 2016). Further, OEDB reported a *US News and World Report* poll indicating 90% of participants did not believe they would be caught or punished for their actions (OEDB 2016). Finally, OEDB reported that a top-tier paper mill website recorded about 8,000 hits per day (OEDB 2016).

COVID-19 and Cheating

Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, colleges and universities have seen a major shift away from the traditional delivery method of face-to-face classes and lectures. Online asynchronous and synchronous courses and hybridized courses have become the new normal over the past year, and may well foretell a shift in some future course offerings from brick-and-mortar facilities to the electronic realm. How has this switch impacted coursework in relation to academic dishonesty?

The sheer volume of reports of academic dishonesty since COVID-19 is mind boggling at the least. Strauss reported on August 7, 2020 that, "Universal online testing has created a documented increase in cheating, often because universities, colleges and testing companies were unprepared for the scale of the transformation or unable or unwilling to pay for safeguards..." Isai reported in the *National Observer* on September 28, 2020 that, "Schools and colleagues of mine have been reporting consistently, not only in Canada but across the globe, that academic misconduct has skyrocketed." said Sarah Eaton, a University of Calgary associate professor, and editor at two academic integrity research

journals.” Ruf (2008) reported that colleges across the nation have reported similar trends during the COVID-19 pandemic. As noted above, it appears rates of academic dishonesty have increased exponentially during the time of COVID-19.

Here are a few examples of academic dishonesty during COVID-19. Princeton investigated academic dishonesty in a linear algebra class, with many students being caught by copying a deliberately incorrect equation and answer from a cheating website into an exam (Ort 2020). The US Air Force reported 249 Academy cadets engaged in various acts of academic dishonesty after the switch to online classes during COVID-19 (Losey 2021). The University of Missouri reported 150 students were caught in a cheating scandal after the transition to online or hybrid coursework due to COVID-19 (Havranek 2020). Texas A&M likewise reported a large cheating scandal involving websites that share answers and large group chats (McGee 2020). While Texas A&M did not share actual numbers, they reported many, many students were involved in this cheating scandal. Similarly, Houston school districts have reported hundreds of cases of plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty since the switch to distance learning (Strauss 2021). Bilen and Matros (2020) reported that college and university reports of academic dishonesty have increased dramatically during COVID-19.

Unfortunately, the time frame from the onset of COVID-19 to 2023 severely limits the availability of peer-reviewed journal articles on this topic.

Hence, a plethora of news reports. The evidence points to an increase in academic dishonesty due to the switch to online learning during the past year due to restrictions from COVID-19. The specter of Chat GPT and artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool of academic dishonesty has arisen as final thesis edits were occurring.

Defining Academic Dishonesty

Why is the definition so important? President Bill Clinton once declared he did not have sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky. This denial was predicated on a very narrow definition of sexual relations. Research by Burrus, McGoldrick, and Schuhmann (2007) indicated students in their research did not clearly understand what academic dishonesty was, and reported higher instances of cheating once the actual definitions were made clear. Burrus, McGoldrick, and Schuhmann theorized that a consistent and precise definition of both unacceptable and acceptable behaviors could lower incidences of unacceptable behaviors.

Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU) defines academic dishonesty through student's actions, including plagiarism, cheating, and collusion regarding these activities (2016). In addition, MNSU (2016) defined plagiarism as including the submission of other's work as your own or with only minor changes, submitting other's work without adequate citation or other reference forms, and utilizing the same work in multiple classes without faculty approval. Penn State University (PSU) applies the same definition to academic

dishonesty (PSU 2016). Cheating was defined as the use of materials or assistance not previously authorized to satisfy academic assignments (MNSU 2016). Collusion was defined as assisting others with the acts of plagiarism or cheating (MNSU 2016). A term similar to collusion is cooperative cheating and includes students try to help both themselves and others by using and sharing resources online or by dividing up the workload to conquer an assignment (Heckler, Forde, and Bryan 2013).

Berkeley City College takes a slightly different approach and defines academic dishonesty (or misconduct) as any kind of cheating which occurs in relation to a formal academic exercise including deception and false information, fabrication of data, plagiarism, cheating, and sabotage (Berkeley City College 2016). Kibler et al (1988) definition of academic dishonesty included forms of cheating and plagiarism involving students giving or receiving unsanctioned assistance or receiving credit for other's work. Some institutions of higher learning go into more detail than others regarding what constitutes academic dishonesty, but all include what can be considered the big three: plagiarism, cheating, and collusion with others who are cheating.

Online distance education, the online environment, and the commercialization of education may have increased instances of academic dishonesty by easing access to both resources and the ability to cooperatively share these resources. Rather than chasing a journal down in a library and making copies of it, we now log in and access a plethora of information

electronically. This access, and the sense of education being a commodity paid for by students has led to digital plagiarism overtaking and surpassing other forms of academic dishonesty (Heckler et al. 2013). Tied to this is the purchase of papers online, which has been reported by Hanson and Anderson (2015) to have grown into a global industry. In regards to commercialization, one perception of college perceives it as a commodity which is bought and paid for, which, in that context, suggests academic dishonesty is perfectly okay as a means to a purchased end (Hanson and Anderson 2015).

Statistics and research lay out a grim picture regarding the prevalence of academic dishonesty. Aluede, Omoregie, and Edoh (2006) reported that even in China, where a threat of death hangs over being caught cheating on civil service exams, cheating still occurs. In research involving 2,068 college students, Lin and Wen (2007) found 62% of students reported committing academic dishonesty in some fashion. Finn and Frone (2004) reported academic dishonesty is an ongoing and highly prevalent issue at all grade levels. Further, approximately 55% of students reported having cheated during their college careers (Lupton, Chapman, and Weiss 2000). Whitley, Nelson, and Jones (1999), in their study of 107 studies regarding academic dishonesty among college students, found that 70.4% of students had cheated in some form, with 47% reporting plagiarizing other's works, 43% cheated on tests, and 41% cheated on homework assignments.

Stanford reports 73% of surveyed test-takers agreed most students do cheat at some point in their academic careers, including prospective graduate students and teachers (Stanford 2016). It was also reported that the general public sees cheating as a problem (41%) more so than college administrators, of whom only 35% see it as a problem (Stanford 2016). Stanford also reported data indicating between 75% and 98% of college students surveyed reported having cheated in high school, whereas only about 20% reported this in the 1940's (Stanford 2016). A Penn State survey on academic integrity, carried out in 2008, found 59% of students surveyed reported cheating on class assignments, and 11% admitted to having committed plagiarism (Penn State 2016). Research carried out by the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) indicated 43% of 17,000 responding graduate students admitted to cheating on tests or written assignments (ICAI 2021). Additionally, this same research on undergraduates indicated that 68% of 71,300 undergraduate students reported cheating on tests or written assignments (ICAI 2021).

A cornucopia of issues exists pertaining to academic dishonesty. Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU) provides an extensive list on their website categorizing dishonesty on exams, and includes items such as using notes, copying other's answers, and giving a false excuse for missing an exam; dishonesty on written papers, including copying other's work without citation, falsifying quotations, and listing real but unread sources in a reference section; and dishonesty on papers or classwork, including turning in other's work as your

own, collaborating on individual assignments, allowing others to copy your work, and falsely claiming to have turned in an assignment (PLNU 2016). Stanford University (2016) includes purchasing papers or test questions and paying another to do the work for you. Obviously, other items are included under the heading of academic dishonesty.

This paper has two aims: to provide a sociological understanding of academic honesty and provide evidence of the prevalence and of student justifications for academic dishonesty. Next, I review literature related to deviance, as well as data related to occurrences and instances of academic dishonesty before turning to sociological theorizing on the subject.

SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Multiple sociological approaches can be applied to the phenomenon of academic dishonesty. These approaches can include symbolic interaction, which explains academic dishonesty as a socially learned and accepted means to an end, and accounts which describe how people justify and explain the academic dishonesty in which they engage. However, deviance is the main focus of my study because this theoretical approach offers multiple explanations and rationales regarding academic dishonesty and the circumstances in which students may feel it is okay to cheat to get ahead or finish their degree.

Symbolic interaction is the symbolic meanings applied to various topics through the process of social interaction (Blumer 1966). Further, as described by Waskul (2008:117), "It is the active, reflexive, creative, and communicative

doings of people in which meaning is fashioned.” The implication is that symbolic interaction is a creative process which is formative in nature and is open to interpretation by those involved in the process. As Blumer (1969:2-3) argued, meanings are shaped and changed through the interpretive process of interactions with others. Why do students engage in acts of academic dishonesty when the ramifications of getting caught can be disastrous for their educational careers? Essentially, we act toward things based on the meaning those things have to us, which arises through social interactions with others and may constantly be in a state of flux (Waskul 2008). To extrapolate, the educational goals we set for ourselves may become the center of our universe; the only thing having meaning for us. Thus, we may be willing to engage in and do things we might not normally do to help reach the goal which has deep meaning for us.

Genereux and McLeod (1995) reported certain circumstances led to academic dishonesty including students’ perceptions that tests are unfair, faculty who do not care about cheating, and a student’s reliance upon financial aid and support. A factor to consider is students’ perceptions of other students reporting their behaviors, as higher perceptions that their peers will report academic dishonesty reduces the numbers of acts of academic dishonesty (Burrus, et al 2013). What accounts do students offer? How do they explain and justify their actions to others? How do they justify their acts and actions to others through interactions? Where and how do these perceptions arise among students?

The concept of accounts is a second approach. Aristotle gets credit for elaborating how humans are essentially social animals who seek out others as a part of their wellbeing. MacIntyre (1999) wrote we become dependent upon others as a part of the process of reaching our goals. An account was described by Scott and Lyman (1968: p. 46) as "...a linguistic device employed whenever an action is subjected to valuative inquiry." In other words, an account can be viewed as our explanation of inappropriate or unseemly behaviors; we are justifying why we or someone else did something others may perceive as wrong. Through our accounts, we are typically trying to either provide justification for our acts or actions, or we are making excuses for and denying responsibility for our acts or actions. Recent accounts describe narratives from individuals which are continuously reflected upon and updated based upon feedback and other's stories (Orbuch 1997). If academic dishonesty is the norm at a college or university, students can either justify their own dishonest actions by saying everyone else is doing it, or they can make excuses for their dishonesty by saying they had to be competitive with other students.

Ordinary insanity may provide a clue as to the prevalence of academic dishonesty. The earliest mention of ordinary insanity comes from Worthington (1860) who used it loosely as a point of delineation between insanity and a form of intellectual insanity. Recently, and more relevant to our discussion is Schwalbe's (2017) position of ordinary insanity, through which the extraordinary becomes ordinary. He writes how all behaviors are understood within their

context and context may help us to reexamine what we consider outrageous behavior and what we consider normal behavior (Schwalbe 2017). If we perceive others are engaging in acts of academic dishonesty or there is a perception this is a norm in secondary or postsecondary education, the various acts of academic dishonesty become the standard: the insanity becomes ordinary.

Given the statistics regarding academic dishonesty, it would indeed, be easy to both provide justification for and to make excuses about academic dishonesty. These accounts, especially if accepted by those with whom we interact, can become further justification for future acts of academic dishonesty. If I were to be called out for academic dishonesty, make a case for my actions, and then have my actions be excused or seemingly justified by others by my interpretation of the interactions, it would be further impetus to carry forward those behaviors once again.

Deviance

The seeming prevalence makes one wonder if academic dishonesty is rooted within our educational social structure. Has academic dishonesty and dishonesty within society itself become a social problem? Or, are we seeing a swing in normative patterns of society? Dennis and Martin (2005) reported deviance developed from an interactionist viewpoint which looks at different ways cultural norms and laws vary due to societal influences. Deviance is a variable, and committing an act in one situation may be perfectly normal, whereas committing the same act in a different situation is deviance (Brezina 2000). For

example, killing someone in an act of war is acceptable but it is not okay to kill someone because they spilled your coffee. While an extreme example, this example illustrates how an act in one situation is normative but the same act in another situation is deviant.

Durkheim attributed antisocial drives and behaviors to human nature not constrained by strong social norms (Bowring 2016). Durkheim argued that deviance both served a positive social function and was a normal action (Herman-Kinney 2003). Does our apparently insatiable drive impact and change social norms? When does what is considered deviant become acceptable practice? The other question that comes to mind regards the situation: how do we construe which situation is appropriate to utilize tools that amount to academic dishonesty from those where it is not appropriate? Has this line become blurred or smeared? Where are the moral boundaries which Durkheim felt were drawn by deviant behaviors (Dentler and Erickson 1959), and what is the consensus in society today regarding what is right and what is wrong? Is this so-called state of confusion driving increased amounts of academic dishonesty within our society? Within deviance, several theories examine these questions, and try to answer them. I review four such theories: control theory, labeling theory, differential association theory, and anomie theory.

The first theory I examine is control theory. Marx argued the history of society was simply a history of class struggles, and that economic relationships have a huge role in influencing, among others, educational institutions (Herman-

Kinney 2003: 701-702). The implication is deviance is a violation of bourgeois rules and laws set in place to protect their own interests. According to this theory, academic dishonesty is an act that may be carried out by those who have, and who may want to challenge the bourgeois system in place that may have failed them. Those who commit these acts are impulsive and for whom consequences have no real meaning. Marx might argue academic dishonesty, as a deviant behavior, could be seen as a rebellion against the rules and laws set down by the bourgeois class.

An updated twist on social control theory is thus: deviance is under social control and caused by our relationships and life experiences and a weakening of social bonds with society (Alston, Harley, and Lenhoff 1995). Our connections and ties to others and institutions is the seed from which deviance grows. If, however, the social connections we have created are strong and are tied to others who disapprove of or disagree with deviance, we are less likely to commit acts of deviance. Conversely, weak social ties can lead to acts of deviance for some people, as the consequences of their actions have less meaning for these people (Hirschi 1969; Alston, Harley, and Lenhoff 1995). Does having social relationships and life experiences that tie you to people for whom academic dishonesty is an accepted behavior make a person more willing to be academically dishonest?

Building on and extrapolating from control theory is labeling theory. In essence, the labeling approach is focused on the process through which we have

come to be treated and labeled as deviant. Herman-Kinney (2003: 706-710) wrote that because social norms fluctuate from culture to culture and from year-to-year, and unlikely that most of us share similar norms and values, labeling theorists argue there is no real societal consensus or definition that truly captures what is considered normative or deviant. Becker succinctly said: "the deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label" (Becker 1963; Herman-Kinney 2003).

Labeling theory follows control theory, as control theory leads us to understand and determine whether an act or action can be construed as deviant. The next step, also known as labeling theory, seems to apply the so-called scarlet letter of deviance to individuals. Herein lies the problem. We are all different with different backgrounds, different cultures, different attitudes, and different socioeconomic statuses; these differences mean we think differently, even if slightly, about what behaviors are normal/acceptable or not normal/unacceptable. Some may think they have to do "whatever it takes" to achieve their goals, while others think they must work hard to achieve their goals with integrity.

Research conducted on business majors at colleges turned up interesting findings. Crittendon, Hanna, and Peterson (2009) reported business students might learn to combine best business practices with the culture of cheating as a business model. A cheating culture has emerged giving a competitive edge as people have become more tolerant of cheating behaviors: people saw cheating

as necessary to complete a goal and have a sense everyone else is doing it (Crittendon et al. 2009). A study of high achieving high school students found that 50 percent of respondents did not view cheating as wrong, and 80 percent admitted to cheating at least once (Kleiner and Lord 1999). As indicated, business students and others may well be learning and observing from their surroundings, altering their sense of what it takes to get ahead and what is normative and what is deviant.

At this point, the examples like Martha Stewart, college presidents, and others who have utilized whatever means necessary to get ahead becomes relevant to this discussion. I have a friend who did pest control in the South who always said for every one bug you see, there are likely five more you cannot see. This analogy may well apply, since the examples cited earlier are the ones who have been caught. If the president of a college is exposed for having plagiarized a dissertation and gets away with it, we could assume students may feel it is an acceptable method to achieve their educational goals.

Third is the differential association theory. Sutherland (1939) postulated that individuals engage in deviance based on how their reference groups engage in deviance and through shared experience (Gongaware and Dotter 2005). Deviant behaviors arise from ongoing exposure to attitudes favorable to those deviant behaviors. For instance, if you attend a college and are in a fraternity, and the fraternity promotes passing by any means necessary even if it means cheating, then you are more likely to engage in acts of academic dishonesty.

Insider trading is another example; if your friends engage in insider trading and got away with it you may decide to engage in the same illegal activities. The higher our rates of socialization and fraternization with those engaging in deviant activities and the more we come to identify with these groups, the more likely we are to see those behaviors as normal (Gongaware and Dotter 2005; Matsueda 1998).

A person may grow up with interactions that lead them to believe academic dishonesty is okay. Someone under stress or who is riding the fence grade-wise may be swayed to work harder or to engage in acts of academic dishonesty. Other people may vehemently oppose academic dishonesty based on their interactions. We are all different humans, and we make our own decisions based upon the information given to and received from others. Given the importance of our ability to socialize with others, this imposes a new level of seriousness on the choices people make regarding friends and family.

Finally, is the theory of anomie. Merton (1938) writes about social structures exerting pressure on folks to act in non-conformist ways and how the pressure for success overrides social constraints as a means to that end. In other words, anomie is the confusion or disconnection from conflicting social norms or from a lack of social norms in relation to cultural goals (Featherstone and DeFlem 2003; Merton 1938). Featherstone and DeFlem (2003) explain how anomie was adopted by Merton because "...biological explanations of deviant behavior are inadequate to explain social reality and that, instead, structural conditions should

be considered as inducing deviation from prescribed patterns of conduct.” (2003: p. 477). Simply put, the pressure for success causes some to choose to override social constraints regarding academic dishonesty as a means to the desired end.

Applying Merton’s theorizing to college students, social groups exerting control over behaviors may include the college or university, classes, social groups, and other entities associated with the college or university, and groups outside the university such as parents and employers who want to see a high grade point average (GPA). As Merton (1938: 673) stated, “Every social group invariably couples its scale of desired ends with moral or institutional regulation of permissible and required procedures for attaining these ends.” Familial pressure for success, for example, may tip the scale and cause a student to exceed permissible procedures to attain certain grades. Other factors, such as athletics, scholarships, peer pressure, and others may also drive a student to engage in acts of academic dishonesty as a mechanism to maintain their grades. Society and the ends promoted within society may push students to engage in acts of academic dishonesty. The drive for success and consumerism promoted in television and movies, as well as the online environment promote an ideal to students that fuel a desire to achieve regardless of the method or cost. It is, as stated earlier, social structures exerting control over whether students choose to conform or be non-conformists regarding norms and academic dishonesty. Thus, college students may cheat because our culture tends to apply more value the outcome and less value to the means used to achieve that end.

Why Engage in Academic Dishonesty?

Why do students engage in acts of academic dishonesty? Kleiner and Lord (1999) found that 95% of those who cheated were never caught cheating. McCabe (2005) studied academic dishonesty among 18,000 high school students, and found 50% reported plagiarizing from Internet and other sources, and 70% reported engaging in cheating on tests. Does this trend in academic dishonesty carry over to the post-secondary level? Willen (2004) reported on nationwide research carried out at Duke University that found 70% of those surveyed self-reported engaging in academic dishonesty. In fact, 77% of respondents reported that internet plagiarism was not a big deal, and almost 40% reported engaging in internet plagiarism (McCabe 2005). These acts of academic dishonesty were attributed to gaining a competitive edge among intense competition for good schools and jobs (Willen, 2004).

LaVelle (2008) reported that students paid an illegal vendor to gain access to live test questions on the Graduate Management Admissions Test in order to gain a competitive edge over other students. Once students get away with cheating at the secondary level, or at the post-secondary level, they may be more prone to try cheating yet again as getting away with it emboldens one to take the easy path if there is little or no risk of consequence. Impulsivity- a tendency to take an action without consideration of the consequences of these actions- was a factor found to predict cheating behaviors among those who report engaging in academic dishonesty (Anderman, Cupp, and Lane 2010)

One could argue that the Internet and the age of electronics make academic dishonesty a much easier option for today's students. It could also be a shift in philosophical thought about higher education and a shift in morals regarding academic dishonesty, as many seem to think it is not a big deal. Academic dishonesty is seen as a tool that helps students gain a competitive edge in an often hypercompetitive environment.

Mastery and performance goal orientations come into play when we discuss competition. A mastery goal orientation is focused on mastering the course materials, and is typically an intrinsic motivator. This means students are not in competition with others. On the other hand, a performance goal orientation is focused upon grades and is an extrinsic motivator (Anderman, Cupp, and Lane 2010). This means students are competing directly with others for grades rather than simply knowledge. In regards to competition, research indicates that a performance goal orientation leads to higher levels of academic dishonesty when compared to a mastery goal orientation (Anderman et al. 2010). This seems to follow logic, as students are competing directly with others for grades and may be more motivated to get those grades through any means necessary.

How do students rationalize to others and themselves acts of academic dishonesty? Does it come down to excuses and justification? Colnerud and Rosander (2009) examined several rationales for academic dishonesty, including conscious deception, in which cheating is a voluntary choice; self-deception, which is essentially self-manipulation as the student considers themselves to be

the producer of the text; and ignorant deception, which includes students not knowing or understanding rules regarding academic dishonesty, and an overall lack of familiarity with academic writing in general.

Other rationales were presented by Naghdipour and Emeagwali (2013), including the ideal of winning at any price, the overall competitiveness of today's job market, everyone else is doing it, and other factors such as individual traits and psychological factors. LaDuke (2013) reported that impaired morals, inadequate role models, competition, perfectionism, and a self-view that their actions do not denote cheating behaviors were potential reasons for a tendency toward academic dishonesty.

Donse and Van de Groep (2013) noted factors such as demographic characteristics, in which males and younger students were more prone to engage in academic dishonesty; individual characteristics, such as religious beliefs, grade point average, and an intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation that may lead to academic dishonesty; and other contextual factors, such as fraternity or sorority membership and other extracurricular activities that lead to a tendency toward academic dishonesty.

Another rationale is that these behaviors are somewhat of a norm within an industry. For example, it was reported that many elements of the legal practice included the unattributed usage of other's writings when drawing up draft copies of judgments and other legal documents, as it is considered expedient (Hanson and Anderson 2015). If it is okay to do this as a practicing lawyer, they

reason, why is it not okay to do this in law school? This is the question many students face.

Neutralization is another form of rationalization. Neutralization can be defined as a technique to justify one's behaviors before committing an act of academic dishonesty. Sykes and Matza (1957) introduced this theory and included five types: (1) the denial of responsibility (the test is too hard and thus, unfair). The student has to cheat to be competitive with their peers; (2) the denial of injury (the students' acts of academic dishonesty do not cause harm to others or to the university, thus it is okay to engage in the act); (3) the denial of the victim (the students' acts of academic dishonesty are rightful retaliation against an educational system that denies the student the grades to which they are entitled as a paying customer); (4) the condemnation of the condemners (all students cheat or plagiarize, as do the teachers.) The president of the college committed plagiarism on her dissertation, so why are you telling students they cannot do it; and (5) the appeal to higher loyalties (It's just academic dishonesty... it's not like the student killed someone or anything).

Through the use of neutralization, students can justify their behaviors to others and themselves before committing them, during commission, and after they have committed the behaviors. Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff, and Clark (1986) report that, indeed, neutralization plays an important role in the commission of acts of academic dishonesty as a tool to reject the disapproval of self and those around us.

Cultural Dimensions of Academic Dishonesty

What role does culture play in academic dishonesty? How do we address culture in a sensitive manner while maintaining academic integrity? In many cultures, information is viewed as being common property that is honorably shared rather than monopolized by one or a few (Gadpaille 2004). Indeed, the sharing of information without citation or editing is both legitimate and proper in some cultures (Bennett 2017). This and other research does indeed seem to point to a cultural dimension to academic dishonesty, which is brought to the forefront by the internationalization of education (Bennett 2017). After having taught at the college level for 16 years, I have lost count of the international students I have had in class. As the world has become flatter, we are seeing an influx of students from many different cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural research indicates that students display reliance upon their own cultural norms when producing works in English (Deckert 1993; Bennett 2017). What is considered academically dishonest is thus culturally contingent.

Symbolic Interaction and Academic Dishonesty

As signified above, many reasons have been offered and theorized regarding the commission of acts of academic dishonesty. Symbolic interaction is an approach I believe to be useful in explaining academic dishonesty. There is much give-and-take involved in interactions with others; others learn from us, and we learn from them regarding many different topics. It is truly a process through which meanings are shaped and reshaped through our interactions with others.

Things acquire meaning that previously had no meaning and other things will lose the meaning that they once had based upon our interactions and with whom we interact. If students have grown up believing that cheating to get ahead is wrong, but once they get to college it seems that everyone is doing it, and did not see it as a big deal. This could change their earlier perspective. Additionally, if students' perception is that everyone else is cheating to get ahead, then they may see the need to do it themselves in order to equalize the playing field. On the other hand, students may have had a high school experience where they did not have to struggle or work very hard to succeed. Once the students get to college, they realize that it is much harder work than they thought it would be, leading to panic. This panic may lead students to academic dishonesty. They get away with it a few times, the professors are wrapped up in their research and really don't seem to care, and before they know it, academic dishonesty takes on a role as the new norm for their educational experience.

Through students' interactions with others, they are listening to and offering up their accounts; the stories or narrative about their day and their activities. These stories and narratives provide justifications and excuses for student behaviors and actions. If students are discussing academic dishonesty, or they had been caught by their friends engaging in academic dishonesty, then their narrative likely contains excuses or justifications for their behaviors.

These excuses and justifications serve a role, either removing blame or allowing us to exert claims of just cause. It can include needing to stay

competitive, leveling the playing field, everyone else is doing it, not having time to study or multiple tests or assignments were due, or simply being lazy and watching football rather than doing your work. The beauty of an account, or a narrative or story, is it is either approved or disapproved through interactions with others. For example, you tell your stories or narratives regarding your academic dishonesty enough times and get enough responses that allow you to interpret those responses as either approval or denial of approval, depending upon the answer you want. Alternatively, you tell your story or narrative regarding your academic dishonesty to a group of like-minded others who do the same, and you will get tacit approval from the group. Regardless, social interactions allow us to define or refine the meanings of things such as cheating.

Deviance, and various theories of deviance were also examined for their role in academic dishonesty. Deviance, essentially, is a label applied through symbolic interactions with others within society. A problem with deviance is that it could be said to be in a near constant state of change, as it relies upon cultural and societal norms, which seem to change constantly. If society defines one thing as being good and proper, and another as being deviant and wrong, where does academic dishonesty fall onto this scale of justice? Is it wrong to cheat in one occasion but not in another? Where do boundaries lay between normal and deviant behaviors? Do the increased amounts of academic dishonesty within our society denote a change in societal norms regarding academic dishonesty? These are all good questions, and a valid research project of their own.

These various theories of deviance can be construed to show student's choices about academic dishonesty can evolve around several factors, including how their peers respond to acts of academic dishonesty. Favorable attitudes toward academic dishonesty, paired with students' abilities- or perceptions about their abilities- can lead to their committing acts of academic dishonesty.

METHODS AND DATA

Purpose of the Research

This study examined attitudes and perceptions of academic dishonesty to build on existing research within sociology. The scope of this research encompassed participants' knowledge regarding academic dishonesty, attitudes about academic dishonesty, and perceptions of academic dishonesty. There is a need for research in this arena given the instances of academic dishonesty occurring at large and small institutions of higher learning and the dearth of research within the field of sociology.

Research Questions

This study examined participants' knowledge of academic dishonesty, acts of academic dishonesty, and reasons for academic dishonesty. Additionally, the relationships between gender, age, ethnicity, year of study, and academic dishonesty were examined.

Research questions:

1. What numbers of occurrences of acts of academic dishonesty will participants report? How do participants report the frequency of committing acts of academic dishonesty?
2. Which gender differences exist, if any, in occurrences of acts of academic dishonesty?
3. What role does age play in students' likelihood of engaging in academic dishonesty? Are younger adult participants more likely to report committing acts of academic dishonesty than older adult participants?

Procedure

In summer and fall of 2019, a survey consisting of Likert-type questions, yes/no questions, and open-ended questions was administered to individuals who were informed they were participating in social science research to measure their knowledge of and beliefs about academic dishonesty. The participants were informed their participation required completion of an online survey which could take 10-15 minutes. Open-ended questions allowed participants to voice other comments or opinions. The survey examined participants' understandings of what constituted academic dishonesty, their opinions regarding academic dishonesty, why or why not they saw academic dishonesty as acceptable or not acceptable, and this survey anonymously measured their self-reported instances of academic dishonesty and reasons for this dishonesty. The survey instrument can be found in Appendix B. Participants were asked to report how frequently

they had engaged in various acts of academic dishonesty, according to the definitions provided (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Definitions of Acts of Academic Dishonesty

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- 1. Plagiarism:** the submission of other's work as your own or with only minor changes, submitting other's work without adequate citation or other reference forms, and utilizing the same work in multiple classes without faculty approval.
 - 2. Cheating:** the use of materials or assistance not previously authorized to satisfy academic assignments.
 - 3. Cooperative Cheating:** students trying to help both themselves and others by using and then sharing resources online, or by dividing up the workload to conquer an assignment without permission from professor.
 - 4. Collusion:** assisting others with the acts of plagiarism or cheating.
 - 5. False Information:** knowingly providing information, citations or other items that is made up or is not true.
 - 6. Fabrication of Data:** knowingly reporting or providing data that is falsified and/or untrue.
 - 7. Submitting Other's Work as your Own:** knowingly submitting information, assignments, test answers, or other academic information prepared or completed by another as your own unique work.
 - 8. Buying Papers:** the act of bartering with others or purchasing assignments, test answers, and/or writing assignments to submit as your own unique work.
 - 9. Sabotage:** knowingly providing false and/or incorrect data regarding test answers, class assignments, or other academic assignments to other students.
-

Participants were given an informed consent form, and demographic information was collected. Anonymity was maintained through having participants complete the survey electronically via Qualtrics, providing only the name of their respective institution, their major, and their current academic year. All data was subsequently moved into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet where any identifiable data was excised.

ANALYSIS

Demographic Characteristics

Two hundred and seven participants from two institutions of higher learning representing both a two-year college and a four-year university responded to an invitation to complete a brief survey. One institution was a major four-year university located in southern Minnesota with an enrollment of 14,761 students in 2020. The other institution was a community and technical college in southern Minnesota with an enrollment of 2,653 students in 2020. Responses from the 207 participants were analyzed. Of note, some students skipped some demographic questions which were a part of the survey.

Twenty-four percent of participants (49) reported as male, and 72 percent of participants (146) reported as female. One percent of participants identified as transgendered (2). Finally, five percent of participants (5) identified as other in response to this item (see table 1).

Participants were also asked to self-select their race/ethnicity. Seventy two percent of participants (145) reported their race/ethnicity as White/Caucasian. Ten percent of participants (20) reported their race/ethnicity as Black/African-American. Seven percent of participants (14) reported their race/ethnicity as Latino/Hispanic. Four percent of participants (8) reported their race/ethnicity as Asian/Pacific Islander. Three percent of participants (7) reported their race/ethnicity as Multiracial. Four percent of participants (8) reported their race/ethnicity as other (see table 1).

Participants were asked to self-report their age. Fifty-three percent of participants reported their age as being in the 18 - 21 range (102). Another 19 percent of participants reported their age as being in the 22 - 25 range (35). Nine percent of participants reported their age as being in the 26 - 29 range (17). An additional 15 percent of participants reported their age as being in the 30 - 33 range (28). Finally, 4 percent of participants reported their age as being 34 or older (7). For the purposes of this research, I will refer to participants aged 18 through 25 (N = 137, 72%) as “younger adult participants” while “older adult participants” include participants aged 26 years and older (N = 52, 28%). Participants reported a mean age of 22 years (see table 1), so most are younger adults.

Participants were asked to report their number of completed semesters at the time of completion of the survey. Fifty-two percent of participants (103) reported being in or having completed one to two semesters of college. Twenty-four percent of participants (48) reported being in or having completed three to four semesters of college. Finally, 24 percent of participants (49) reported having completed five or more semesters of college (see table 1).

Participants were asked to report their current grade point average (GPA). Thirty-nine percent of participants (78) reported having a current GPA in the 3.5-4.0 range. Thirty-six percent of participants (72) reported having a current GPA in the 3.0-3.4 range. Sixteen percent of participants (33) reported having a current GPA in the 2.5-2.9 range. Eight percent of participants (16) reported having a

current GPA in the 2.0-2.4 range. Finally, two percent of participants (3) reported having a current GPA below 2.0 (see table 1).

Participants were asked to report their reliance upon financial aid as a means of paying for their education. Fifty-two percent of participants (107) reported relying on financial aid to cover 76% – 100% of their educational costs. Seventeen percent of participants (16) reported relying on financial aid to cover 50% – 75% of their educational costs. Eleven percent of participants (10) reported relying on financial aid to cover 25% – 49% of their educational costs. Finally, 22 percent of participants (21) reported relying on financial aid to cover 0% – 24% of their educational costs (see table 1).

Table 1: Sample Demographics

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	49	24%
Female	146	72%
Transgender	2	1%
Other	5	2%
Ethnicity		
White	145	72%
Black	20	10%
Latino/Hispanic	14	7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	8	4%
Multiracial	7	3%
Other	8	4%
Age		
18 – 21	102	53%
22 – 25	35	19%
26 – 29	17	9%

30 – 33	28	15%
34 +	7	4%
Semesters Completed		
1 – 2	103	52%
3 – 4	48	24%
5 +	49	24%
Grade Point Average		
3.5 – 4.0	78	39%
3.0 – 3.4	72	36%
2.5 – 2.9	33	16%
2.0 – 2.4	16	8%
Below 2.0	3	1%
Financial Aid Reliance		
76% - 100%	52	53%
50% - 75%	16	16%
25% – 49%	10	10%
0 – 24%	21	21%

Results

This was a two-part questionnaire. Part one examined academic dishonesty from the viewpoint of participant beliefs. Part two examined actual reported engagement in acts of academic dishonesty by participants. I asked participants about their beliefs before asking them to report their behaviors to ensure that their reported beliefs were not influenced by their reporting of dishonest behaviors. However, I will discuss them in the reverse order. We will thus first examine reported acts of academic dishonesty by participants, and then look at participant beliefs regarding academic dishonesty.

Acts of Academic Dishonesty

I hypothesized that participants would report large numbers of occurrences of acts of academic dishonesty (see Table 2). Results of this research indicate that some categories did indeed show high occurrences of acts of academic dishonesty, ranging from seven percent to as high as 56 percent. On average, 38 percent of students (79) reported engaging in acts of plagiarism in college. Further, 27 percent of students (56) reported engaging in acts of cheating, and 56 percent of students (114) reported engaging in acts of cooperative cheating in college. Forty-four percent of students (91) reported engaging in acts of collusion in college. Eleven percent of students (23) admitted to submitting false data while in college. Nineteen percent of students (40) reported engaging in acts of fabrication while in college. Fourteen percent of students (29) reported submitting other's work as their own while in college. Seven percent of students (15) reported buying and/or bartering coursework submitted as their own while in college. And finally, 10 percent of students (21) reported committing acts of sabotage against other students while in college. Of those who participated in this research, 73 percent (150 out of 206 respondents) reported engaging in acts of academic dishonesty while in high school.

Table 2- Results by Theme of Academic Dishonesty

Theme	Students	Affirmative Answers
Plagiarism	79	38%
Cheating	56	27%
Cooperative Cheating	114	55%

Collusion	91	44%
False Information	23	11%
Fabrication	40	19%
Submitting Other's Work as your Own	29	14%
Buying/Bartering Coursework	15	7%
Sabotage	21	10%
High School Behaviors	150	73%

I also hypothesized that men would be more likely than women to commit acts of academic dishonesty (see table 3). Results indicate that overall, 45 percent of women engaged in acts of academic dishonesty (235 reported acts), while 51 percent of men (216 reported acts) committed acts of academic dishonesty. Proportionately, men committed a higher percentage of acts of academic dishonesty, as they made up but 24 percent of those who completed the survey compared to women, who comprise 72 percent of those who completed the survey.

Table 3- Academic Dishonesty Results by Gender

Theme	Affirmative Answers	Female	Male	Trans/Other
Plagiarism	79	43 (54%)	33 (42%)	3 (4%)
Cheating	56	20 (36%)	34 (61%)	2 (3%)
Cooperative Cheating	114	69 (61%)	44 (39%)	1 (.002%)
Collusion	91	51 (56%)	36 (40%)	4 (4%)
False Information	23	9 (39%)	13 (57%)	1 (4%)
Fabrication	40	21 (52%)	19 (48%)	0

Submitting Other's Work as your Own	29	8 (28%)	17 (59%)	4 (13%)
Buying/Bartering Coursework	15	7 (47%)	8 (53%)	0
Sabotage	21	7 (33%)	12 (57%)	2 (10%)

Finally, I hypothesized that younger adult participants would report committing acts of academic dishonesty at higher rates than older adult participants (see table four). Results indicate that younger adults did report engaging in acts of academic dishonesty at higher levels than did other age groups, as younger adult students reported committing 65 percent (305 instances) of reported acts of academic dishonesty. In comparison, older adult students reported committing 35 percent (163 instances) of reported acts of academic dishonesty.

Table 4- Academic Dishonesty Results by Age

Theme	Affirmative Answers	Younger Adults	Older Adults
Plagiarism	79	55 (70%)	24 (30%)
Cheating	56	34 (61%)	22 (39%)
Cooperative Cheating	114	72 (63%)	42 (37%)
Collusion	91	62 (68%)	29 (32%)
False Information	23	15 (65%)	8 (35%)
Fabrication	40	27 (68%)	13 (32%)
Submitting Other's Work as your Own	29	18 (62%)	11 (38%)
Buying/Bartering Coursework	15	10 (67%)	5 (33%)
Sabotage	21	12 (57%)	9 (43%)

Beliefs Regarding Acts of Academic Dishonesty

Even higher than reported numbers of academic dishonesty are those numbers regarding beliefs about acts of academic dishonesty (see table 5). It was hypothesized that participants would report large numbers of occurrences of acts of academic dishonesty. While only 38 percent of participants reported committing acts of plagiarism in college, 82 percent of participants reported it was okay to commit acts of plagiarism in college. Additionally, 27 percent of participants reported committing acts of cheating in college, but 38 percent of participants reported it was okay to cheat in college. Fifty-five percent of participants reported committing acts of cooperative cheating in college, while only 37 percent of participants reported feeling it was okay to cooperatively cheat in college. Of those participating, 44 percent reported committing acts of collusion in college, while 52 percent reported that it was okay to collude on tests and assignments in college.

Additionally, eleven percent of participants reported committing acts of providing false information in college, while 90 percent of participants felt it was okay to make up and/or provide false information in class assignments, lab reports, and homework in college. Nineteen percent of participants reported committing acts of fabricating data in college, while 87 percent of participants felt it was okay to make up or falsify data for a thesis, dissertation, or other major paper. Fourteen percent of recipients admitted to acts of submitting other's work as their own in college, while 13 percent of participants felt it was okay to submit

other's work as their own in college. Additionally, seven percent of participants admitted to acts of buying or bartering coursework in college, while 50 percent of participants felt it was okay to do this in college. Finally, 10 percent of participants admitted to acts of sabotage against other students in college, while 47 percent of respondents felt it was okay to sabotage other students via provision of false information in college. The data suggests students either are underreporting their own acts of academic dishonesty, or that they are unbothered by their peers' academic dishonesty. Definitions of these various acts of academic dishonesty are spelled out in Appendix A

Table 5- Results by Theme of Academic Dishonesty

Theme	Participants	Committed Acts	Believed Acts are Okay
Plagiarism	207	38%	82%
Cheating	207	27%	38%
Cooperative Cheating	207	55%	37%
Collusion	209	44%	52%
False Information	209	11%	90%
Fabrication	209	19%	87%
Submitting Other's Work as your Own	209	14%	13%
Buying/Bartering Coursework	209	7%	50%
Sabotage	209	10%	47%
High School Behaviors	206	73%	

Summary of Findings

In this study, results indicated students engaged in acts of academic dishonesty. Results indicated students believed engaging in acts of academic dishonesty was a valid form of successfully completing college work. Finally, this study indicated nearly three-quarters of students actively engaged in academic dishonesty while in high school. The results supported predicted outcomes. The findings indicate, overall, both the participants' beliefs regarding academic dishonesty and their actions regarding academic dishonesty involve a shift in thinking about what it takes to be successful in academia.

Male students admitted to more acts of academic dishonesty than did female participants, thus supporting the hypothesis that males would report committing more acts of academic dishonesty. The data is especially interesting, given that as table one shows, 72 percent of students in this research identified as female. The data indicates that males, who made up only 24 percent of students in this research committed 4.4 acts of academic dishonesty overall per student, while females committed 1.6 overall acts of academic dishonesty per student.

Younger students, who made up 70 percent of student participants committed more acts of academic dishonesty than did older students who made up 27 percent of student participants, defined by the researcher as those aged 18 – 25 years of age. This jibes with the reported data of committing acts of

academic dishonesty in high school, which was reported by 73 percent of student participants.

ANALYSIS and DISCUSSION

Academic dishonesty can take on many different facets in higher education today. These facets of academic dishonesty that have been identified by colleges and universities and included in this research includes plagiarism, cheating, cooperative cheating, collusion, provision of false information, fabrication of data, submitting others' work as your own, buying or bartering coursework, and sabotage. Another act of academic dishonesty can also include deception, or the act of purposefully deceiving the college, a class, a professor, a student, or others regarding works submitted (Berkeley City College 2016). A clear definition of what we construe to be academic dishonesty is vital in reducing incidences of academic dishonesty (Burrus et al. 2007), as we should be communicating this to students as a means to establish clear boundaries between acceptable and not acceptable behaviors.

Once we start to break down the different teaching methods and formats, such as online synchronous, online asynchronous, face-to-face, hyflex, and hybrid classes, we can see how easily faculty lose track of students and students can lose track of their professors and classes, resulting in academic pressure to excel or to simply pass the class. As classes and class information increasingly move online, so does the ways and forms of academic dishonesty. As Heckler et al (2013) and Hansen and Anderson (2015) discussed, digital plagiarism and the

outright purchase of papers via the online world proliferate. A top tier paper mill website reported about 8,000 hits per day (OEDB 2021). Other data indicated that about 90 percent of participants who cheated did not think they would get caught or punished for their actions (OEDB 2021). The actual data regarding academic dishonesty is disheartening, as 68 percent of college students (out of a test pool of 71,000 students) reported cheating on tests or written assignments while in college (ICAI 2021). CHEGG, a subscription-based website that allows students to post homework and assignments by college faculty, reported a 196 percent increase in postings of questions and answers in their homework help section from April 2020 to August 2020. What does this mean? As the data from this research indicates, students engage in acts of academic dishonesty. This new technology makes these acts more accessible.

Given the factors relating to academic dishonesty, this study examined the actions and beliefs of students in regard to nine types of academic dishonesty. Specifically, it examined whether respondents engaged in acts of academic dishonesty and what their beliefs were regarding engaging in acts of academic dishonesty. Data from 207 students representing a two-year college and a four-year college in the state of Minnesota were analyzed. The results of this study could be meaningful in building an understanding of student actions in regard to acts of academic dishonesty in relation to academic success and graduation rates of students. Additionally, it could provide both information and awareness to campuses in regards to academic dishonesty practices by students and

necessary updates to policies and procedures by those working in higher education.

Implications

The implications of this study are substantial but may prove problematic to put into action. A large proportion of students reported committing acts of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, cheating, cooperative cheating, collusion, submitting false information, fabrication of data, submitting other's work as their own, sabotage, and buying or bartering coursework (See Table 5). Highlights include cooperative cheating, with 55 percent of students, collusion, with 44 percent of students, cheating, with 27 percent of students, and plagiarism, with 38 percent of students.

Just as troubling are the findings students believe certain acts of academic dishonesty are acceptable (See Table 5). Incredibly, 90 percent of students reported submitting false information was okay. Eighty-seven percent of students reported fabricating data was okay. Eighty-two percent of students believe plagiarism was okay. Fifty-two and 50 percent of students believe collusion and buying or bartering coursework was okay.

Generalizing the research to the overall population of college students in Minnesota or to the United States as a whole could call into question the genuineness of and the value of education. It calls into question the overall validity of assignments given and student artifacts submitted. It calls into question the integrity of the institution and of the degrees conferred by the institution. What

is real and what isn't real regarding student work becomes the question. This leads to the question of what can colleges and faculty members do to combat academic dishonesty?

In light of the findings, students reported college administrators and faculty need to demonstrate they take academic dishonesty seriously. Institutions need to implement serious consequences and strict enforcement of academic dishonesty policies. Further, students reported they need to be educated on what exactly constitutes academic dishonesty. Students reported faculty need to change up their course materials, assignments, and exams every semester. Other suggestions from students included giving tests in class, limiting the amount of time given to complete tests, utilizing services like Turnitin to monitor student submissions, stop giving out-of-class assignments, and stop teaching online courses.

After presenting this data at a conference, I was surprised when a faculty member from another college approached me and stated he had no clue that some of the things I talked about constituted academic dishonesty, and he had engaged in those practices as a student throughout the achievement of his education. This was really eye-opening and reinforced the participant recommendations for education on academic dishonesty.

What can we do? At the faculty level, we should never assume students understand academic dishonesty. The acts that constitute academic dishonesty and the consequences for committing acts of academic dishonesty need to be

clearly spelled out. This message also needs to be delivered to teaching assistants and graduate assistants. Finally, strict enforcement of existing college policies regarding academic dishonesty is required.

At the department chair level, communicate academic dishonesty policies to faculty, including a process map that lays out steps, actions, and institutional expectations on academic dishonesty. If necessary and appropriate at your institution, meet with the faculty to review cases of academic dishonesty and complete any requisite paperwork.

Academic deans, if appropriate at your institution, should meet with the faculty and the student and complete any necessary paperwork regarding the incident of academic dishonesty and the consequences are for the student.

Academic deans should reiterate to faculty and department chairs the seriousness with which the institution regards academic dishonesty and the need to strictly enforce existing academic policies and procedures. Finally, academic deans should consider revising and/or revamping academic dishonesty policies and procedures that may be outmoded or behind the times given the changes to higher education and advances in academic dishonesty techniques.

Senior leadership at the college or institution should actively discuss and promote academic dishonesty policies and their enforcement to the administrative team. Senior leadership should ensure it is a topic of conversation with both new and existing faculty. Finally, the administrative team should consider revising and/or revamping existing policies and procedures regarding

academic dishonesty that may be outmoded given the changes to higher education and advances in academic dishonesty techniques.

While time-consuming for faculty, department chairs, deans, and senior leadership at a time when their focus may be pulled elsewhere in a hundred different directions, it may also be a cost for the institution of higher learning. However, ensuring the classes and the programs offered and the degrees conferred have integrity is a worthy pursuit for higher education. We've all heard of degree mills and it is a safe bet that we do not want our college or institution to be considered a degree mill.

The purpose of this study was to investigate academic dishonesty through looking at students' acts of academic dishonesty and their beliefs regarding various acts of academic dishonesty. Students offered suggestions on how to reduce incidences of academic dishonesty. Congruence between admitted acts of academic dishonesty and admitted beliefs regarding academic dishonesty was vague, as participants reported higher levels of beliefs regarding academic dishonesty than actual acts of academic dishonesty. This may indicate an under-reporting on the scale of acts of academic dishonesty committed by participants.

It may be time for administrators of institutions of higher learning to invest time, effort, and money in training and educating current and future students, faculty, and administrators about academic dishonesty. The training is important, as participant reports regarding academic dishonesty include faculty and administrators not taking it seriously and not enforcing it, a lack of knowledge

of what the institution considers to be academic dishonesty, and faculty members using the same course assignments and materials over and over. How does one convince a college to invest money for a pay-off that may be several years down the road in this time of public accountability and financial struggles? It would be an investment in the student's educational experience, as thriving institutions seem to focus on three basic things: students feeling they are legitimately earning the grades they receive, students not feeling the need to cheat to keep up with other students they suspect of or know are cheating, and that the degree conferred is a legitimate and has integrity.

Strengths and Limitations

This study displayed three main strengths. First, student beliefs about carrying out acts of academic dishonesty are high; their reported beliefs are higher than their reported instances of engaging in acts of academic dishonesty. This indicates an openness to committing acts of academic dishonesty and may be an indicator their reported acts of academic dishonesty are underreported. This is of concern to higher education because it calls into question the integrity of grades and degrees conferred.

Second, current faculty and academic officers may be operating on outdated presumptions of academic dishonesty and underestimate the numbers of students who view academic dishonesty as a viable means to an end for earning passing grades. This research reveals students believe institutions as a whole, and faculty members specifically should focus more on prevention and

punishment for academic dishonesty. Further, faculty and institutions should update policies and procedures to reflect the evolving nature of academic dishonesty as they push courses and programs into hybrid and virtual modes of delivery.

Third, this study has contributed to the overall body of data regarding academic dishonesty in its various forms. As reported earlier there has been research on this topic going back to the 1920's. But, given our modern devices, committing acts of academic dishonesty is easier than ever. Thus, information about and strategies about academic dishonesty is important for all.

This study also has three limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small in proportion to the total number of college students available. The study was voluntary. Students chose to participate or to not participate.

Second, the study examined students at one two-year college and one four-year University in Southern Minnesota. It may prove applicable to the two specific institutions of higher learning, but it may not be applicable to other colleges within the state or across the United States. There is an inherent excluded transferability to other colleges even though data indicates academic dishonesty encompasses most institutions of higher learning. There could be a state-specific system (MinnState) which influenced the outcomes of this research.

Finally, the third issue involves incomplete demographic data. A majority of participants completed the demographic data, but some completed only bits

and pieces. The demographic data did not collect the participant's institution, thus disallowing a comparison between the two-year college and the four-year university represented in this research.

Recommendations for Further Research

Given the outcomes of the current research, and knowing the strengths and weaknesses, two recommendations are made for future research. First, a replication could lead to a varied and larger sample population encompassing rural and metropolitan campuses, and a mix of private and public institutions. More participants allow a truer image of the data and ensures generalizability across institutions. This would increase both the reliability and validity of the research.

Second, strategizing ways to ensure all demographic data AND the survey itself are completed needs to happen as this study is replicated. The issue is that we cannot force participants to complete what they may deem as extraneous work after completing a survey. While it ultimately may be better to have the survey filled out completely rather than having the demographic information filled out completely, a perfect world would see both completed.

Finally, a third recommendation is to conduct this research using refined demographic information to include more defined demographic data to allow for deeper analysis. This could allow comparisons between similar institutions and across different types of institutions.

In closing, as research into academic dishonesty has previously shown, academic dishonesty is likely occurring at all levels of the education spectrum, from K-12 to the community college to the baccalaureate, Master's and Doctoral levels. This research found student participants both admitted to engaging in acts of academic dishonesty and expressing belief in academic dishonesty being okay to achieve academic goals. The results indicate a problem exists within higher education and does not even include the growing phenomenon of ChatGPT and other AI-driven forms of academic dishonesty.

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Appendix A

Definitions of Acts of Academic Dishonesty

- 1. Plagiarism:** the submission of other's work as your own or with only minor changes, submitting other's work without adequate citation or other reference forms, and utilizing the same work in multiple classes without faculty approval.
 - 2. Cheating:** the use of materials or assistance not previously authorized to satisfy academic assignments.
 - 3. Cooperative Cheating:** students trying to help both themselves and others by using and then sharing resources online, or by dividing up the workload to conquer an assignment without permission from professor.
 - 4. Collusion:** assisting others with the acts of plagiarism or cheating.
 - 5. False Information:** knowingly providing information, citations or other items that is made up or is not true.
 - 6. Fabrication of Data:** knowingly reporting or providing data that is falsified and/or untrue.
 - 7. Submitting Other's Work as your Own:** knowingly submitting information, assignments, test answers, or other academic information prepared or completed by another as your own unique work.
 - 8. Buying Papers:** the act of bartering with others or purchasing assignments, test answers, and/or writing assignments to submit as your own unique work.
 - 9. Sabotage:** knowingly providing false and/or incorrect data regarding test answers, class assignments, or other academic assignments to other students.
-

Appendix B

Study of Academic Dishonesty

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study regarding your understanding of, attitude about, and instances of academic dishonesty. The goal of this survey is to understand what college students' current attitudes and understandings are regarding academic dishonesty at post-secondary colleges in Minnesota, and you will be asked to answer questions about that topic. This research is being conducted by Dr. Wayne Whitmore and supervised by Dr. Sarah Epplen through the Department of Sociology at Minnesota State University-Mankato.

PROCEDURE

If you agree to participate as a subject in this research, you will be asked to complete an electronic survey. This survey has three parts, and may take the average user 7 to 10 minutes to complete.

POTENTIAL RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

The risks of participating in this study are no more than are experienced in daily life.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

There are no direct benefits for participating. College students may benefit through an increased understanding of exactly what constitutes acts of academic dishonesty.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY

Participation is voluntary. The researcher will not be able to see who responds to the survey. You have the option to not choose to participate in this research. You may stop taking the survey at any time by closing your web browser. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato.

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Survey responses will be stored in an excel spreadsheet with no identifying information. Responses will be stored electronically for three years and then any data will be destroyed. It will only be available to Dr. Epplen and Dr. Whitmore. No names or identifying information other than the name of the respective college will be recorded.

Survey responses will be anonymous. However, whenever one works with online technology there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the Minnesota

State University, Mankato Information and Technology Services Help Desk (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS

This research is being directed by Dr. Sarah Epplen (Minnesota State University-Mankato). If you have any questions about the research, please contact Dr. Epplen at 507-389-5669 (sarah.epplen@mnsu.edu). or Dr. Wayne Whitmore at 507-389-7400 (wayne.whitmore@mnsu.edu). If you have questions about the treatment of human participants and Minnesota State University, Mankato, contact the IRB administrator at 507-389-1242.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

Submitting the completed survey indicates your informed consent to participate in this study. Also, submission of this survey attests that I am at least 18 years of age or older. All questions that may have arisen have been answered by this document or the investigators listed above.

Please print a copy of this page for your future reference.

MSU IRBNet ID: 1196835-1

Date of MSU IRB approval:

Appendix C

Study of Academic Dishonesty

Instructions: Answer each of the items below by marking the number corresponding to your choice on the Likert Scale provided. Please mark only one answer!

- 5- Strongly agree:** you strongly agree with the statement.
- 4- Agree:** you agree with the statement.
- 3- No opinion:** you have no opinion on this statement.
- 2- Disagree:** you disagree with the statement.
- 1- Strongly disagree:** you strongly disagree with the statement.

An example is below:

<i>Example:</i> Pizza with ham and pineapple is the best pizza money can buy.	SA	A	NO	D
		SD		
	5	4	3	2
				1

Please become familiar with these terms relating to academic dishonesty.

- 1. Plagiarism:** the submission of other's work as your own or with only minor changes, submitting other's work without adequate citation or other reference forms, and utilizing the same work in multiple classes without faculty approval.
- 2. Cheating:** the use of materials or assistance not previously authorized to satisfy academic assignments.
- 3. Cooperative Cheating:** students trying to help both themselves and others by using and then sharing resources online, or by dividing up the workload to conquer an assignment without permission from professor.
- 4. Collusion:** assisting others with the acts of plagiarism or cheating.
- 5. False Information:** knowingly providing information, citations or other items that is made up or is not true.
- 6. Fabrication of Data:** knowingly reporting or providing data that is falsified and/or untrue.
- 7. Submitting Other's Work as your Own:** knowingly submitting information, assignments, test answers, or other academic information prepared or completed by another as your own unique work.
- 8. Buying Papers:** the act of bartering with others or purchasing assignments, test answers, and/or writing assignments to submit as your own unique work.
- 9. Sabotage:** knowingly providing false and/or incorrect data regarding test answers, class assignments, or other academic assignments to other students.

Academic Dishonesty Survey Part 1

Answer each of the items below by circling the letter corresponding to your choice on the Likert Scale provided. Remember, this survey is completely anonymous... answer as truthfully as possible.

SA = Strongly agree	A = Agree	NO = No opinion	D = Disagree
	SD = Strongly Disagree		

- | | | | | | | |
|----|--|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. | It is okay to use what I find on the Internet in my academic work without referencing it because it is free and open to the world. | SA | A | NO | D | SD |
| 2. | It is allowable to utilize my textbook and other resources when completing take-home assignments and/or online tests, even if instructed not to. | SA | A | NO | D | SD |
| 3. | It is not okay to take an assignment and break it into pieces and divide the workload if we are supposed to do it on our own. | SA | A | NO | D | SD |
| 4. | It is not okay to allow others to copy my assignments or homework. | SA | A | NO | D | SD |
| 5. | It is okay to make up or provide false statements in assignments or papers I write. | SA | A | NO | D | SD |
| 6. | It is acceptable to fabricate data for classroom assignments, lab assignments, or homework. | SA | A | NO | D | SD |
| 7. | It is not acceptable to use other people's assignments as my own. | SA | A | NO | D | SD |
| 8. | It is acceptable to barter for or purchase a paper or assignment from a friend or someone else on campus to submit as your own work. | SA | A | NO | D | SD |
| 9. | It is not okay to knowingly provide false information to classmates regarding material on tests or assignments. | SA | A | NO | D | SD |
-

10. It is okay to copy and paste parts of other's work into my work as long as most of the work is original to me.	SA A NO D SD
11. It is not okay to copy others' work when completing my tests or assignments for my classes.	SA A NO D SD
12. It is not okay to divide up questions on a take-home exam and answer them as a group if we are supposed to do it on our own.	SA A NO D SD
13. It is acceptable to allow others to copy answers from a test I am taking.	SA A NO D SD
14. It is okay for me to provide false citations, or to provide citations I have not used in papers that I write.	SA A NO D SD
15. It is okay to make up or falsify data for major papers, such as a thesis or a dissertation.	SA A NO D SD
16. It is not okay to submit work I found online as my own academic work.	SA A NO D SD
17. It is not okay to purchase a paper or an assignment from anyone on campus if you intend on submitting it as your own work.	SA A NO D SD
18. It is acceptable to knowingly provide false information to classmates regarding material on assignments or tests.	SA A NO D SD
19. Information from websites cannot be utilized without citation, even if it is out there for the world to see.	SA A NO D SD
20. It is not acceptable behavior to utilize resources to complete assignments when we have been told not to utilize them.	SA A NO D SD
21. It is okay to take an assignment and break it up in the multiple parts and divide that up among my friends so that we each complete a portion of the	SA A NO D SD

	assignment that we share with everyone else.					
22.	It is okay if I let other people copy assignments or homework that I have completed.	SA	A	NO	D	SD
23.	It is not okay to provide false information that supports my argument in assignments or papers I write.	SA	A	NO	D	SD
24.	It is not okay to use fake data when reporting findings for class assignments or homework.	SA	A	NO	D	SD
25.	It is okay to utilize an assignment I found online to fulfill requirements for my academic assignments.	SA	A	NO	D	SD
26.	It is okay to purchase a paper or an assignment from an online source to submit as your own work.	SA	A	NO	D	SD
27.	It is okay to write down fake answers to an assignment and then share them with another student.	SA	A	NO	D	SD
28.	While it is easy to copy and paste parts of others' work, or whole documents, this is not acceptable in my academic assignments.	SA	A	NO	D	SD
29.	It is okay to use notes and to copy from others on tests and assignments in my classes.	SA	A	NO	D	SD
30.	It is okay to divide up questions on a take-home exam among my classmates so that we each complete parts of the test that we share with everyone else.	SA	A	NO	D	SD
31.	It is not okay to allow people to copy answers from my tests.	SA	A	NO	D	SD
32.	It is not acceptable to make up or provide false citations in papers that I write.	SA	A	NO	D	SD
33.	It is never okay to falsify data when completing your thesis or dissertation.	SA	A	NO	D	SD

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| 34. | It is justifiable to borrow academic assignments for my roommates, friends, or others to submit as my own. | SA | A | NO | D | SD |
| 35. | It is not acceptable to buy a paper or an assignment off of the Internet and submit it as your own work. | SA | A | NO | D | SD |
| 36. | It is not acceptable to write down fake answers and share them with other students. | SA | A | NO | D | SD |

Academic Dishonesty Survey Part 2

Instructions: In the last year, estimate the numbers of occurrences of these acts you have committed by marking the corresponding answer. Remember, this survey is completely anonymous... answer as truthfully as possible.

Very Often (10 plus times)	Often (7 – 9 times)	Sometimes (4 – 6 times)				
A Little (1 – 3 times)	N = Never					
1.	I have knowingly used or copied other people's work to use in my academic assignments without altering the content.	VO	O	S	AL	N
2.	I have copied off of others while completing tests or quizzes.	VO	O	S	AL	N
3.	I have collaborated with others on assignments even though they were supposed to be done individually.	VO	O	S	AL	N
4.	I have allowed others to copy class assignments or homework that I had completed.	VO	O	S	AL	N
5.	I have created false or fake citations in papers I have written.	VO	O	S	AL	N
6.	I have fabricated data for academic assignments and/or other writings.	VO	O	S	AL	N
7.	I have submitted academic work I found on the Internet as my own work.	VO	O	S	AL	N
8.	I have purchased a paper or assignment to submit to a class.	VO	O	S	AL	N

- | | | | | | | |
|------------|---|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 9. | I have provided fake answers to other students regarding content in assignments or tests. | VO | O | S | AL | N |
| 10. | I have used information from other authors without giving them credit for their work. | VO | O | S | AL | N |
| 11. | I have copied and submitted classwork from my friends and peers as my own. | VO | O | S | AL | N |
| 12. | I have collaborated with others on take-home exams even though the tests were supposed to be done individually. | VO | O | S | AL | N |
| 13. | I have allowed others to copy answers from my test on an in class or online test I was taking | VO | O | S | AL | N |
| 14. | I have created false or fake citations in papers I have written. | VO | O | S | AL | N |
| 15. | I have utilized fake data in the completion of written assignments and/or labs. | VO | O | S | AL | N |
| 16. | I have submitted academic work from roommates, friends, fraternity or sorority mates, or others as my own work. | VO | O | S | AL | N |
| 17. | I have bartered for or bought an assignment or paper that I submitted as my own work. | VO | O | S | AL | N |
| 18. | I have provided false information about assignments or tests purposely to classmates. | VO | O | S | AL | N |
| 19. | In high School, how often did you engage in behaviors that would be defined as academic dishonesty? | VO | O | S | AL | N |

Academic Dishonesty Survey Part 3

Instructions: The following is a list of reasons students may use to justify their own academic dishonesty. Check each box next to the statement(s) you see as justifications for academic dishonesty.

Justifications	
I need to do it to be competitive.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I need to do this to get the highest grade possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't have enough time to do it on my own.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The professor doesn't care; there are no real consequences.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The tests are too hard and are thus unfair.	<input type="checkbox"/>
What I'm doing does not really hurt anyone.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Everyone else in class is doing it.	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's just cheating on a test; it isn't that serious.	<input type="checkbox"/>
My workload is too heavy; I have to sometimes take shortcuts.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am paying for my education; it should not matter how I get my work done.	<input type="checkbox"/>
This is an industry norm in my field of study; you do what it takes to get ahead.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't believe I could be successful on my own.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (write in any other justifications):	

Have you ever been caught committing any of these acts of academic dishonesty? **Yes** **No**

If you have been caught, what were the consequences?

Instructions: The following is a list of possible solutions to reduce acts of academic dishonesty. Choose five statement(s) you see as solutions for reducing academic dishonesty.

Possible Solutions	
Serious consequences if caught.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strictly enforcing academic dishonesty policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Professors taking it seriously.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education about what exactly constitutes academic dishonesty.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussions with professors regarding how to avoid academic dishonesty.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building discussions of academic dishonesty into every class.	<input type="checkbox"/>
All tests should have to be completed in-class.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limit the amount of time students have to complete tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professors should change their assignments every semester.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use technology, such as Turnitin to monitor student's work.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instill an honor code for all students to abide by and follow.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eliminate online courses.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stop giving out-of-class assignments.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (write in any other justifications):	

Part 4: Demographic Information

I- Indicate your gender:

1. Man (1)
2. Woman (2)
3. Transgender (3)
5. Other (4)

II- Which best describes your ethnicity?

1. White (1)
2. Latino/Hispanic (2)
3. Black/African-American (3)
4. Native American (4)
5. Asian/Pacific Islander (5)
6. Multiracial (6)
7. Other (7)

III- What is your country of birth?

IV- Write in your age at the time of completion of this survey:

V- Number of semesters of college completed (including this current semester):

1. 1 – 2 semesters (1)
2. 3 – 4 semesters (2)
3. 5 or more semesters (3)

VI- College Enrollment?

1. Undergraduate (1)
2. Master's degree (2)
3. Doctorate (3)

VII- Major/Intended Major?

VIII- Estimate of Current GPA?

- a. 3.5 – 4.0 (1)
- b. 3.0 – 3.4 (2)
- c. 2.5 – 2.0 (3)
- d. 2.0 – 2.4 (4)
- e. 1.9 or lower (5)

IX- Are you a student athlete on any sports team at the college?

- a. Yes (1)
- b. No (2)

If yes, what sport:

X- If you are a student athlete, are you funded by a scholarship?

- 0 – 25 % of education funding. (1)
- 26 – 50 % of education funding. (2)
- 51 – 75 % of education funding. (3)
- 76 – 100 % of education funding. (4)
- Not applicable; not a student athlete. (5)

**XI- Are you a member of either social organization: _____ Sorority (1)
_____ Fraternity (2) _____ None (3)**

XII- How much do you rely upon financial aid?

- 0 – 25 % of education funding. (1)
- 26 – 50 % of education funding. (2)

51 – 75 % of education funding. (3)
76 – 100 % of education funding. (4)

XIII- Are you the first in your immediate family to go to college? _____ Yes
(1) _____ No (2) _____ Do not know (3)

XIV- What are your parental and/or family expectations regarding your attending college?

1. They want me to be a straight A student. (1)
2. They are okay with me being an average student, maintaining a B or C average. (2)
3. They just want me to graduate. (3)
4. They are okay with me failing out of college. (4)
5. I do not know. (5)