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Moral Reasoning of Student and Academic Misconduct Habits: A Qualitative Evaluation

Charles Rooney

Eastern Illinois University

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A qualitative evaluation

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Charles Rooney

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Abstract

Utilizing qualitative methodology, participants' awareness of the academic standard and their development morally based of Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Through conduction one-on-one interview with third year student at a four year public institution, it was found participants have limited knowledge of academic misconduct. Participants were morally developed below what one would expect according to the theory of moral development. Participants stated that academic misconduct is not something most professors go over in class but is something either they have performed or witnessed their peers performing. Participants recommended professors explicitly spending time during syllabus review to go over what academic misconduct is and what the consequences will be for performing these actions. Recommendations for professors were to go in depth with discussion of academic misconduct and review the types with them. They should also take a zero tolerance policy on enforcing the consequences set out by student standards. For moral development, professors and student affairs professionals should continue to engage students in discussions and assignments that help them ask and answer the "why" question. Student Affairs professionals should also stake claim in promotion of academic misconduct within the residence halls and training of staff that interact with students on a day to day basis.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family. Without their constant support throughout the past two years I would not have been able to achieve all that I have. No matter where I go in life I know they will always support me and the choices I make.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Academic misconduct and student's moral development has long been studied on college campuses (Drake, 1941). With dishonesty becoming more visible in government and business, it is also a major dilemma in the academic community. The concern becomes that students are not able to identify between what is right and wrong. This not only affects their decision making in the academic world but can also carry over into their future careers (Bernardi, Metzger, Scofield, Hoogkamp, Reyes, & Barnaby, 2004). The turn of the twentieth century has seen some of the biggest financial scandals. Enron, Tyco, WorldCom, and Aldephia are the largest scandals to record and combined have been estimated to cost the American economy 42 billion dollars of gross product (Mazar & Ariely, 2006).

One of the best examples of public dishonesty occurs when dealing with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Herman (2005) found that between fifteen and sixteen percent of Americans cheat on their taxes each year. Psychologists believe that Americans live by a cost to reward model when deciding to be dishonest (Mazar & Ariely, 2006). This means that the higher the external reward a person will receive the higher level of dishonesty they will use to get that reward. Ross & Robertson (2000) have found that organizations with cultures of dishonesty will have employees who are more likely to engage in dishonesty. A study done by Scott (2003) on airline employees found peer influences and observing others performing a dishonest act to a customer increase the likelihood that they will repeat this action. The factors of peer influence and

observing others cheat are cited as two major factors that lead others to cheat (Etter, Cramer, and Finn, 2006).

Drake (1941) conducted one of the first studies on academic misconduct and found that 23% of students in his study reported cheating. Hetherington and Feldman in (1964) reported the rate of cheating to be 64% in their study. Jendreck (1989) estimated cheating rates between 40 and 60%. In 2005, McCabe studied 18,000 students in 61 schools in the United States and Canada and reported levels of cheating among college students between 50-71%. With the increase in technology, experts believe that this number will continue to rise until universities combat academic misconduct (Gallant & Drinan, 2006).

There are many reasons why students cheat; opportunity, desire to succeed, little or no penalties from professors, academic pressure, and procrastination are many of the top reasons (Simkin & McLeod, 2010). The academic world for students has turned into a competition. They are competing for scholarships, internships, class ranking, and then ultimately will be competing for jobs in the future (Stearns, 2001). This competition is sighted as a shift in why people go into higher education. Traditionally students went to school to learn for learning's sake and now students see it as a stepping stone to a career that will help them achieve status and financial reward (Gallant & Drinan, 2006).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between students' moral development and their decision to engage in academic misconduct. The secondary purpose of this study was to identify the factors that lead students to perform academic misconduct. The findings from this research provide relative and informative data to

student affairs administrators and college instructors become aware of the rate and

reasons why students on campus participated in academic misconduct practices. This also

allowed them to look at the moral reasoning of students and determine if students are

moral or not when making decisions in the academic realm.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed and guided this study:

1. What is the student's awareness of the academic code prior to performing
   academic misconduct?

2. How do the professors promote academic honesty within the classroom?

3. What are the factors that lead students to make the choice to be academically
   dishonest?

4. How is a students' moral development impacted after they commit academic
   misconduct?

Significance of the Study

The proposed study is significant because the amount of college students that are

participating in academic dishonesty practices is higher than ever before (McCabe,

Butterfield, & Trevino, 2006). Student's moral development is also coming into question

with the large number of questionable ethics being practiced by professionals in their jobs

post-graduation (Klein, Levenburg, McKendall, & Mothersell, 2007). The culture of both

the academic realm and the business world is that everyone cheats and in order to

succeed one must use the same tactics as their competitors or fellow students (Koppang

& Martin, 2004). Businesses often bend the truth that they share with consumers to help

sell their products; this is how the business works and if one wants to succeed they must

use bad business ethics (Mazar & Ariely, 2006).

       An issue within the university is whether or not the university by not having or

not properly enforcing their academic integrity codes and promoting more academic

misconduct within the academic realm but also leading students to believe they can get

away with dishonest practices in their future careers (Lawson, 2004). If universities are

not creating ethical classrooms and allow students to be dishonest now to achieve what

they want, students are more likely to take these practices into their future career fields

(Cabral-Cardoso, 2004).

       Research must look at why students perform their academically dishonest acts and

what role the university plays in combating academic misconduct. Looking at reasons

why students perform dishonest acts in the academic realm and where students are

morally can give the administration the tools they need to know how to better curb

academic misconduct and create a culture of students wanting to learn.

Limitations of the Study

       The study was conducted at one institution and results may not be generalizable to

other institutions. The study may over-look the other factors that may lead to academic

misconduct other than moral development. The study may not reflect how the culture of

cheating is perceived on campus, the enforcement of the academic code of conduct, and

how academically driven the students are. The final limitation of this study relies on

students to self-report and may lead to giving answers that they feel are socially

acceptable. According to Finn and Fronn (2004) students stray away from self-reporting

surveys that they believe will reflect negatively on them or something that they feel may

be used by the institution against them.

Definitions of Terms

The following are definitions of terms and concepts to help comprehend the

present study.

Academic honor code. Set of rules or ethical principles governing an

academiccommunity. (Smith, 1936)

Academic misconduct. The act of wrongfully using or attempting to use

unauthorized materials, information, study aids, or the ideas or work of another in order

to gain an unfair advantage. (Lin & Win, 2007)

Cheating. Any attempt to give or obtain assistance in a formal academic exercise

without due acknowledgment (Drake, 1941)

Moral character. Ego strength and the ability of one to live up to their

convictions (Kahn,2006).

Moral development. The emergence, change, and understanding of morality

from infancy through adulthood (Kohlberg, 1971).

Plagiarism. The adoption or reproduction of ideas or words or statements of

another person without due acknowledgment (Lin & Win, 2007).

Summary

Chapter one is a detailed introduction to the proposed study. What the reader can

expect from the study has been proposed. Chapter two will contain an outline of the

literature that has been reviewed in regards to academic misconduct within college

students, reasons students partake in academic misconduct, and student's moral

development. Chapter three contains the methods of how the data for the study will be

collected.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

This chapter provides a detailed review of the literature related to academic misconduct. The review includes a look at academic misconduct in the collegiate arena and student opinions towards academic misconduct. Finally, the moral development of students will be explored.

Types of Academic misconduct

Academic misconduct has been a long standing issue and several studies have brought this issue to light by showing how large an issue academic misconduct is and the concern universities have on campuses across the nation (Drake,1941; Hetherington and Feldman, 1964; Jendreck , 1989; and McCabe, 2005). The newest type of dishonesty that has emerged on a college campus is technology based. Technology based dishonesty has to mainly do with the use of the internet to plagiarize papers, aide in taking tests, or communicate with other class members about a test (Etter, Cramer, & Finn, 2006). The other type of dishonesty people traditionally hear about consist of copying others homework, using cheat sheets while taking a test, or creating a false excuse to get more time on an assignment or test (Schmelkin, Gilbert, Spencer, Pincus, and Silva, 2008). These are the two main types of academic misconduct seen on college campuses and what professors and administrators are trying to protect against.

Technology is only increasing the rate at which students are performing academic misconduct. A national survey conducted by the Center for Academic Integrity anticipated that the internet has increased the number of papers that are plagiarized by 10-40% since 2001 (McCabe, 2005). Information technology has created a whole new form

of cheating for students. Etter, Cramer, and Finn (2006) identified the top ways students use information technology to perform acts of academic misconduct; these include buying a paper online and claiming it as your own, copying and pasting an essay from the internet, using a friend's paper from their computer and claim it as their own, claiming to have technology issues to get extra time on an assignment, and using the internet or text messaging during an exam to get answers. The increase in technology has created more ways for students to cheat but has also created tools for professors to use to catch academic misconduct. A great tool that college campuses have started to use is anti-plagiarism software that allows professors to know whether or not a paper is a student's own work or copy and pasted from their sources (Tobin, 2013). When professors use this software it decreases the chance of a student plagiarizing their paper by 5-8% and also increases the rate professors find plagiarism by 25% (Tobin, 2013).

Not all academic misconduct is technology based and many students still resort to traditional methods of academic misconduct (Schmelkin et. al, 2008). The behaviors listed in Table 1.1 were originally established in a study by Ross (1934). This study was conducted at a midsized Midwestern institution and surveyed 38 faculty members and asked them what types of academic misconduct they witnessed the most. The behaviors have been used in multiple studies by Pincus and Schmelkin (2003) and again by Schmelkin, Gilbert, Spencer, Pincus, and Silva (2008). Pincus and Schmelkin (2003) surveyed 300 college faculty with a response rate of 71% (n=212) usable surveys. The purpose of the study was to uncover some of their underlying perceptions and to gain a better understanding of how the faculty conceptualized academic misconduct. The 28 original methods were given to the faculty along with a survey based on rate of detection,

seriousness of violation, ease of detection, and clear examples. The 28 methods were all

identified as methods that students still used to perform academic misconduct even 69

years after Ross (1934) established the original methods.

Table 1.1
List of Academic Dishonest Methods

Collaborating with others on an assignment that was individual work
Copying homework
Copying information without utilizing quotation marks
Copying material without proper footnotes or citations
Delaying taking an exam or turning in a paper due to a false excuse
Failing to report a grading error
Falsifying or fabricating a bibliography
Forging a University document
Giving answers to someone else during an exam
Giving exam question to students in a later section
Having someone else write a term paper for you
Hiring a ghostwriter
Inputting information or formulas needed for an exam into a calculator
Not contributing a fair share in a group project
Obtaining a copy of the exam to be given prior to class
Obtaining a test from previous semesters
Plagiarizing
Purchasing a term paper to be turned in as one's own
Sabotaging someone else's work
Stealing or copying a test
Studying from someone else's notes
Submitting the same term paper to another class without permission
Taking a test from someone else
Using crib sheets
Utilizing a term paper or exam from a fraternity or sorority test file
Utilizing a tutor or writing center inappropriately
Writing a term paper for someone else

The availability of information technology mixed with well-established

traditional ways of performing academic misconduct leave students with almost an

endless list of possibilities to perform dishonest acts on any assignment. What faculty

were seeing almost 90 years ago continues to be a problem today. This is even compounded by the advance of technology. Students are performing these academic dishonest acts more than ever with no signs of slowing down.

Rates of Academic Misconduct

The rates of students performing academic misconduct has shown a steady increase from the first study done by Drake in 1941 to the studies done by researchers in the early twenty-first century. The rate at which students partake in academic misconduct appears to be increasing and does not show signs of decreasing any time soon (Rokovski and Levy, 2007). Bowers found in 1964 that only 26% of students admitted to some sort of cheating, compared to 52% in a similar study conducted by McCabe and Bowers (1994). This is a trend that many who have investigated the topic of academic misconduct have found (Drake, 1941; Hetherington & Feldman, 1964; Jendreck ,1989; and McCabe, 2005). Klein, Levenburg, McKendall, and Mothersell (2007) discovered that self-reported cheating in colleges increased from 23% to 75% in the years from 1940 to 2007.

In a study by Hard, Conway, and Moran (2006) the rate of academic misconduct reported by students was 70%. The study consisted of 421 undergraduate students at a university with a total population of 9,551. The students were given 16 common cheating behaviors in collegiate courses and asked how frequently they partake in these behaviors and how frequently they believe others engage in these behaviors. Students were asked to fill out the survey after a general studies class, a graduate student administered the survey once the instructor of the course left and were not given any reward for their participation. Klien, Levenburg, McKendall, and Mothersell (2007) administered a questionnaire to students of business, criminal justice, engineering, biomedical sciences,

nursing, and social work at a Midwestern public university. The questionnaire got an

82.5% response rate for a total of 268 returned and valid surveys. The results showed

86% of the students reported they have cheated during their college career, 50% reported

engaging in two to five different types of cheating, and 25% engaged in six or more

different kinds of cheating behaviors (Klien et al. 2007). Rokovski and Leavy (2007)

surveyed 5,317 business students at a northeastern university and received 1,269

responses. The survey asked students about the academic culture professors were creating

in the classroom and their habits of academic misconduct. 60% of the respondents

admitted to performing an act of academic misconduct.

Researchers have identified the reasons why students partake in academic

misconduct, in a recent study Simkin and McLeod (2009) administered a survey to 158

students at a large research institution in the Western United States. The survey asked

students the influence certain factors had in their decision to perform academic

misconduct, the study wanted to answer if the factors that motivating self-reported

cheaters and non-cheaters were the same In this study they discovered the following

motivations for students cheating; desire to get ahead, attitude towards cheating,

opportunity to cheat, cultural or moral acceptance of cheating, low risk of detection, and

heavy time demands (Simkin & McLeod, 2009).

Finn and Frone (2004) found that how strongly a student identifies with a school

or how proud they are to attend that university and how well they fit in on campus may

influence why students choose to cheat. Students that have a strong level of identification

with the school are less likely to cheat than those who did not identify with the school.

The study investigated the relationship between academic performance and cheating.

Finn and Frone (2004) discovered that cheating is more likely with lower achieving students when they do not identify with the school, meaning a student who does not achieve good grades and feels no connection or pride toward the institution are more likely to perform academic misconduct. The study also discovered that higher achieving students with low levels of academic self-efficacy are more likely to cheat. The low efficacy can create stress, anxiety, and limit the ideas of the best way to approach a problem, which leads students to view academic misconduct as the best way to complete the task.

Levy and Rakovski (2007) found that a great way to lower the rate of academic misconduct is a professor that adopts a zero tolerance policy for academic misconduct. Having this zero tolerance policy was found to come at a price, as students will avoid taking classes by a zero-tolerance professor. The avoidance of the professor is executed by both dishonest and honest students, particularly when they know of another professor who shares opposite opinions on the academic code. Schmelkin, Gilbert, Spencer, Pincus, and Silba (2008) contend that professors who do not report academic dishonest behaviors and let them slide are part of the problem in regards to students performing academically dishonest behaviors and need to take a hardline stance on what to do with students who perform these actions.

Students Opinions toward Academic Misconduct

Students' attitudes toward academic misconduct have been a long studied subject (Drake, 1941; Hetherington and Feldman, 1964; Jendreck, 1989; and McCabe, 2005). Bernardi et al.'s (2004) sent the Defining Issues Test (DIT) and the Attitudes on Honesty Scale (AHS) instrument to 300 students at three universities and 239 students completed

the research instrument. The DIT is used to estimate what a person would do given several scenarios and establish a score that is used to access the students' attitudes towards cheating. The AHS questionnaire investigates a range of personal characteristics that are a concern in the classroom. The questionnaires were altered to focus on academic misconduct acts. The results of the study found that cheating behaviors are a function of situational factors and those multiple factors go into deciding whether or not a student will commit academic misconduct (Bernardi, et al., 2004).

The idea of what is considered academic misconduct and what is not becomes a bit more questionable because it can encompass so much. For example, American students do not believe that giving someone past exams or using exams from a prior semester was cheating (Lupton & Chapman, 2002). Lin and Wen (2007) reported that freshmen tend to copy other's assignments, work with others when prohibited, and use electronic resources when not allowed.

Research has shown that women may be more likely to cheat (Diekhoff, Labeff, Shinohara, and Yasukawa ,1999). McCabe and Trevino (1993) conducted a study of 6,096 surveys at thirty-one institutions, studying primarily seniors. The study measured academic misconduct, severity of penalties, honor code, and understanding/acceptance of academic integrity policy. What they found was that females had a greater fear of failing assignments and would resort to cheating because they felt they would not be caught and if they were caught could get out of the punishment (McCabe and Trevino, 1998). McCabe and Trevino (1993) saw that females were more likely to perform academic misconduct whether their school has an honor code or not. The study came upon this conclusion while looking at the peer influence and the communities that are created at

universities that promote academic honesty. Their study looked at the understanding of the honor code, self-reported cheating rate, and their peer influences. Females at these schools admitted to breaking the academic code due to their peer's behavior and performed academic misconduct at a higher rate.

Teodorescu and Adrei (2009) identified that there was a high degree of passivity towards observed cheating and that students would not report them to the university leadership. They also found that when peers are passive about reporting cheating and witness their peers cheating a student is more likely to partake in academic dishonest practices (Teodorescu & Adrei, 2009). Students feel that by not participating in academic misconduct they feel they are being left behind by not partaking (Teodorescu & Adrei, 2009). Bernardi et al.(2004) suggest that cheating is a function of the situational factors and that cheating is a slippery slope, once a student cheats and gets away with it, they continue these cheating habits throughout their academic career. Students who continually partake in these dishonesty practices have developed a "we" versus "them" mentality, where "we" is the student and "them" is the faculty.

Moral Development

Moral development is something that starts early in a human's life, Peter Kahn believes a moral relationship begins in children as early as age five (2006). The first relationship Kahn identifies is a child and a nonhuman world he uses the example of a child playing with a dog and hitting it and the dog whimpering away. The child learns quickly that this action hurts the dog and learns not to hit the dog or other things because it causes them pain and moral humans would not want to cause other nonhuman or humans pain (Kahn, 2006). Killen and Smetana (2006) believe moral development is

established through the environment in which an individual grows up. If the environment

surrounding an individual continues to give little or no consequences for acts that are

deemed wrong by society, an individual will view these actions as right since they are not

being punished for them (Killen & Smetana, 2006). Moral development is a constant

progression for individuals in learning what is right and wrong. Individuals progress

through stages of moral development and base what actions will be taken in situations on

where they stand in their moral progression (Kahn, 2006).

Kohlberg (1971) built upon research originally done by Piaget (1932) to develop

his six stages of moral development. The first stage of Kohlberg's theory is

heteronomous morality. In this first stage, what is right is defined as obeying rules to

avoid punishment and refraining from physical harm to others and their property. This

would be a student that decides to cheat on an assignment and as long as they are not

caught doing so they will move forward without it weighing on their conscience.

Stage two is individualistic morality; this is when an individual follows the rules

if it is in their interest to do so. They understand that others have their own agenda that

may conflict with their own, so right becomes what is fair. A student in this stage would

perform academic misconduct if they had procrastinated on an assignment and needed to

cheat to get it done on time.

Stage three is interpersonally normative morality. In this stage individuals meet

the expectations of those whom one is close to and carry out their social roles. An

example of a student in this stage would be one who knows cheating is wrong but

performs academic misconduct because their Greek organization provides them with

previous test and everyone else in the group uses these tests. Conversely, another

example could be of the student who is highly involved on campus and is very aware of campus policy and procedure and chooses not to engage in academic misconduct because of the impact it will have on them, and their social place at the institution.

The fourth stage of moral development is social system morality, which is when an individual view the social system as made up of a set of rules and procedures applying equally to all. A student in this level of morality would not perform academic misconduct under any circumstances because they know it might have a greater impact on the larger social system. Stage five is human rights and social welfare morality. In this stage laws and social systems are appraised based on the extent to which they endorse fundamental human rights and values. An example of a student at this stage would be one who hold their fellow organization members accountable for taking an online exam together and not following the academic code or rules set by the university and faculty member. The final stage of Kohlberg's moral development is morality of universalizable, reversible, and prescriptive general ethical principles. In this stage equal consideration of the points of view of all involved are made in a moral situation. Kohlberg (1971) never found existence of this stage but stated that is a philosophical and theoretical stage necessary to bring his theory to a logical end point.

Kohlberg (1971) believed that students in college should be in stage 3, seeking to do what will gain the approval of others, or stage 4, which is when one abides by the law and responds to the obligation they have to duty. West, Revencroft, and Shrader (2004) state that students who participate in academic misconduct are in the second stage, where they are focused on acting in their own interest and have little concern for how this affects others or what the repercussions are for this behavior. King and Mayhew (2010)

stated that attending college is not enough and that students must get the whole college experience by engaging in things outside of the classroom.

Becoming more aware of the world in general and one's place in it does more to foster moral development than specific experiences (Rest, 1986). Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) stated that college may aid moral development by providing a variety of social, intellectual, and cultural experiences for students. The social experiences students get in college can include living in the residence halls, joining campus organizations, serving as a leader on campus, or simple interactions with others in the dining hall (Pascarelly & Terenzini, 1991). Intellectual experiences can happen inside the classroom, discussions with peers, faculty, or administrators, or from expanding their own knowledge through text or research. Cultural experiences can include interactions with peers, attending diversity workshops or training, and classes. These experiences can be with upper class students interacting with younger students and showing their higher-stage thinking. This can in some cases provide conflicting perspectives on issues especially related to moral development (Whitelely, 1982). For instance if a younger student is taking over for treasurer of an organization and the older student who is training him teaches him how he can steal funds from the organization and not get caught, this situation will create conflict with the younger student. The younger student will begin to question what is right and wrong and may view this action of stealing as right since an older more experienced individual taught him how to perform this action.

Mustapha and Seyberty (1990) contended that professors play a large role in facilitating discussions of moral dilemmas and through showing strong moral convictions can set students up to practice the same beliefs. In a research study by Derryberry and

Thomas (2000) revealed that having supportive friends can help students build strong moral beliefs compared to students who have little or no social networks who may struggle to develop in moral judgment. Students that have friends to support their choices and give them feedback on what is right and wrong, will be more confident in being able to determine what choices are morally right and wrong.

Rest (1979) developed the Defining Issues Test (DIT) to look at moral judgment as a way of investigating moral reasoning and looking at the development of students. The DIT gives scenarios to the test taker and then asks what decision the test taker would make if they were in that situation. The next part of the test gives the test taker different influences that could alter the decision the test taker previously made. The test taker also rates these influences on a likert scale from one (great influence) to five (no influence). Based off the answers to the scenarios and influences, the test takers receive their DIT score. The higher the score the further morally developed a person is, the lower the score the less morally developed. Rest (1986) identified those who develop sound moral judgment are those who seek education and want to continually challenge themselves, and enjoy being intellectually challenged. They are people who are successful in academic settings and have strong support in their outside life. Rest (1986) contested that this is set up by the environment a student comes from; their family, friends, this plays a large factor on their moral development once they get to college and how they will develop in their four years there.

Summary

Based on the research presented, academic misconduct has been a part of the culture on college campuses for almost 80 years and an act that students perform

regularly. These acts have increased overtime and do not show signs of slowing down. Students do not view academic dishonest acts as something that is wrong and find many of the acts to be completely acceptable depending on the situation. The cheating culture is dependent on how much emphasis the institution and professors put on the academic code of conduct. College students should be at a state morally where partaking in such dishonest practices are in their past and should be trying to please society and be concerned with their actions. The information in this chapter guided the researcher in the completion of this study.

Chapter III

Methodology

This outlines the procedural structure that was used to perform this study. This study utilized a qualitative approach to understand the topic of the moral development of undergraduate students as it relates to academic misconduct. This method helped identify what factors lead to academic misconduct and how aware students are of academic misconduct, was also investigated through the qualitative study.

Design of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze factors that lead to academic misconduct, what the students' understanding of academic misconduct is, and the university emphasis on academic misconduct at a mid-sized Midwestern University. The secondary purpose of this study was to determine the moral development of these students based on answers regarding their opinions on academic misconduct. The qualitative method of collecting this information is best because the primary investigator (PI) was looking to understand the different perspectives and experiences from the unique vantage point of each individual participant (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003). The PI identified five individuals to participate in the study.

Participants

Participants consisted of five undergraduate students at the start of their third year at a medium sized Midwestern university. Students lived on campus within any of the eleven different residence halls or resided in the university provided Greek housing. Third year students living on campus have been selected because they have experienced enough variety of college courses and have a greater chance of experiencing academic

misconduct and the academic standard. The participants were identified by the University

Housing and Dining Office, a list of students who have attended the university for three

years was provided. From this list a random selection of individuals was emailed a brief

description of the study and asked if they are interested in participating in the study. The

participants were chosen based on the first individuals who responded and expressed

interest in participating in the study. People who responded to the email once participants

were selected to be kept as alternates. Participants were given informed consent and

could discontinue the survey at any time. No incentive was provided for participation.

Participant #1. Ashley is a Caucasian female in her third year at the institution

majoring in special education. She is an executive board member for the residence hall

honor society, elected to this position by her peers. She lives in an all-female residence

hall and has a self-reported grade point average between 3.75 and 4.0.

Participant #2. Shirley is a Caucasian female in her third year at the institution

majoring in English. She lives in an all-female residence hall and is a member of the hall

government. She has a self-reported grade point average between 3.75 and 4.0.

Participant #3. Elaine is an African American female in her third year at the

institution majoring in psychology. She lives in university provided Greek housing and

serves in an executive board member voted upon by her peers. She has a self-reported

grade point average between a 2.75 and 2.9.

Participant #4. Lucy is an African American female in her third year at the

institution majoring in Corporate Communication. She lives in university provided Greek

housing and is involved in a modeling agency on campus. She has a self-reported grade

point average between 3.25 and 3.49.

Participant #5. Jerry is a Caucasian male in his third year at the institution majoring in History. He lives in a co-ed building in a primarily upper-class building. He is involved in his hall government and represents them in the campus residence hall association. He has a self-reported grade point average between 3.75 and 4.0.

Research Site

This study took place at a mid-sized (8,975 students) university in the rural mid-west United States. The university has a graduation rate of 59%. The university is located in a small farming community of around 23,000. The school is moving towards putting a stronger emphasis on academics and has developed campus offices in the past few years to aid students their academics. The interviews took place in a meeting room in a residence hall, the interviews did not last more than one hour. Each interview was voice recorded.

Instruments/Instrumentation

The proposed study consisted of a paper demographic questionnaire (Appendix B) and a face-to-face interview. The demographic questions asked the participant to provide their class standing, age, on-campus residential location, gender, grade point average, and major. The PI served as the primary instrument for data collection. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and consisted of open-ended questions that were pre-determined (Appendix A). All interviews took place in the residence hall meeting room. The interviews were voice recorded, then transcribed after each interview took place. Participant's names were not transcribed, but pseudonyms were created for each participant.

Data Collection

The interviews took place in the first three weeks of October during the 2014 fall semester. With the permission of the participants, each interview was voice recorded. Once the interview was complete, the PI transcribed the voice recording and then coded the transcription of the interview and looked for patterns. The transcriptions were kept on a password protected computer owned by the PI and only the PI and the advisor had access. Transcriptions are essential in qualitative studies because it will allow more interpretation by the PI and analyze information given in the interviews (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003). Coding is the process of developing categories to sort data; this is the critical link between data collection and the explanation of meaning (Saldana, 2013). Coding was done by organizing the data and giving them a code to capture the primary content and essence of what the interviewee is stating (Saldana, 2013). Bias by the researcher was removed by developing suitable questions that are pertinent to the study and create consistency with each interview.

Data Analysis

Data was collected within a three week period. After each interview, the data was transcribed and coded. This process was done by reading the data and determining fragments within the data and each was labeled with a code (Saldana, 2013). Field notes taken were also transcribed to be analyzed. All data was kept on a private password protected computer. Pseudonyms were created to keep the identity of each participant anonymous.

Summary

Chapter III presented the methods for the study. This is a qualitative study that used interviews as the source of data collection. The interviews took place in a university

residence hall, and were recorded and transcribed. Once transcribed, the investigator

identified themes between the participant's responses.

Chapter IV

Results

This chapter is a presentation of information gained from five third year students about their understanding of academic misconduct. This was accomplished through conducting one on one interviews with students to answer the following research questions that guided this study.

1. What is the students' awareness of the academic code prior to performing academic misconduct?

2. How do the professors promote academic honesty within the classroom?

3. What are the factors that lead students to make the choice to be academically dishonest?

4. How is a students' moral development impacted after they commit academic misconduct?

In an effort to keep participants identities confidential, participants were identified by pseudonyms. Through transcription, coding, and analysis of data, themes were detected in the responses from the interviews. This chapter will provide an overview of the themes to answer the research questions.

Student's awareness of the academic code at the institution

The institution of this research study has an academic code that can be found in the student code of conduct. Faculty are required to include the statement of misconduct on every syllabus, this is mandated by the Institutional Governing Board. The participants were asked several questions about the academic code of conduct. All of the participants

knew that the institution had a code and were able to identify different types of academic conduct.

When asked where they had seen the academic code, all participants stated they had seen it on syllabi from class, but that faculty did not necessarily talk about it. Jerry stated "they all have similar or certain things they have in the syllabi but they do not cover the entire thing." Three students stated they had specifically read it in the handbook. Elaine stated "I had to read it in my freshman year in a [freshman seminar] class. Then every teacher mentions it after." Shirley took it upon herself to read the code, she stated "since it was on every syllabus, I felt I was responsible to know what it said." Jerry shared similar experience as Shirley and looked up the code for himself after seeing it listed on all of his syllabi.

Three participants, Ashley, Elaine, and Jerry spoke about instructors talking specifically about it in class. Ashely stated "faculty just say that we know what not to do and move on." One participant, Lucy had been unaware of the policy, she stated:

> I had an incident where I gave my work to someone and they copied my answers word for word but they left a sentence from one of my examples and it created a grammar error but it was obvious that it was copy and pasted in. A professor came to me because she knew it was me. She referred me to the academic code of conduct.

Lucy was the only participant that found out about the academic code by violating the code.

Participants were asked what types of academic misconduct they were of aware of or had been told about. Every candidate mentioned plagiarism as a type of academic

misconduct. Jerry stated "My more writing intensive classes hit on plagiarism and stealing other peoples' work." Elaine stated "plagiarism became big in high school. I did not learn about plagiarism till my freshman year in high school when large papers came into play with lots of citations." Lucy was the only participant who spoke about different types of plagiarism, she stated:

> A class I took said patch work plagiarism where you take pieces of people's works. The type where it is your work were you have made but you use it for another assignment. I learned about, well there is like five different types of plagiarism.

> Beyond plagiarism, the next most mentioned type of academic misconduct was cheating, mentioned by four participants. Jerry stated "with the classes that are more test oriented they do touch a lot more on not cheating during the test and do not bring notes or use your phone." Shirley was aware of a few additional types of academic misconduct, she stated:

> With calculators you can program in the calculator so the answers come up without any work. Looking over the shoulder, plagiarism is really big because I am an English major and if your friend took the class and they gave you all their notes.

She was the only one who mentioned passing on notes as a type of academic misconduct.

> If the participants did not read it in the handbook, the only exposure to the academic code participants identified was professors putting a blurb about the academic code on the syllabus. The major types of academic misconduct that individuals listed were plagiarism and cheating or looking off someone else's test. These two types of

misconduct were either ones professors brought up in class or things they have witnessed other students perform.

Professors' promotion of the academic code within the classroom

Each participant was asked several questions exploring how professors educate, promote, and review the academic code. Three main themes came up while investigating professors' discussion of academic honesty within the classroom. Those three themes included: syllabi, reminders, and major.

Syllabi. The most common way participants identified that professors promote academic honesty is through the syllabus. At the institution of this study all professors are required to put a section about the academic code on their syllabus, however most do not go over the code in its entirety with their students. Every participant stated that their professors put the academic code on the syllabi, but it is not typically discussed in detail. Lucy stated "It is always on the syllabus but is always passed over and not really covered. They leave it up to us to look it up." Lucy also spoke about how she has observed older professors describing the academic code while going over the syllabus more than younger professors, who she shared seem to think students should just know it.

When asked if instructors cover the academic code when going over the syllabus, Jerry shared "they all have similar things in the syllabuses but they do not cover the entire thing. All of them just put it on the syllabus." Ashley, Shirley, and Lucy stated the professors leave it up to the students to look up the academic code. Three of the five participants admitted to not looking up the code on their own time.

With all participants being in their third year of college, some professors make assumptions their students should know the academic code. Elaine said "none read it or

force us to look it over, they assume we know it from previous classes or look it up ourselves." Shirley echoed, "they [professors] think since you have made it this far you are doing the right thing and should know not to cheat." When asked about how much responsibility lies on professors to inform students, Ashley said "the professors need to be more aware of what is going on in their classes and maybe educate students more on what consequences are and accept the fact that these things do happen." Ashley stated that professors would spend more time educating students on the academic code if they were aware of how often the code was broken.

The syllabus is the only exposure many students are getting to the academic code. The extent to which faculty review it is up to them, and for many students it is the only exposure to the academic code in their time at the institution.

Reminders. Each participant was asked how often or how little professors reminded them of the academic code throughout the semester. Each participant shared that their professors have brought up reminders on following the academic code throughout the semester. Elaine discussed how one of her professors has brought up the academic code three or four times throughout the semester, "it is before assignments and exams. The main ones they talk about are plagiarism and cheating off an exam." Elaine touched on how students have plagiarized on a specific assignment and what the professor will be looking for or reiterate before a test to not look off other people's papers, bring crib sheets, or use their phone.

Several participants stated that professors only bring up the academic code prior to big assignments, but not necessarily during the small assignments. Lucy touched on the fact that her professors only remind her on papers that are six pages or more and other

assignments like that, but they do not talk about it for small assignments. Jerry confirmed

his professors only do it for big assignments and test and stated "I feel like a lot of

individuals 'cheat' on small homework assignments." All of the participants that admitted

breaking the academic code, did it on what they labeled as small assignments.

These reminders from professors can play a factor into how students' view the

academic code. Reminders about violations that are common on certain assignments may

be the only reminder or education students receive about academic misconduct.

Major Type. Each participant identified coming from a different major. A factor

discussed in professors' support of the academic code was from the department the

professor taught. Elaine, a student in the psychology department, stated her professors

were "like hounds on the academic code, almost every psych class I have it is mentioned

constantly." She stated that professors in the art department seemed to brush it over and

not mention academic misconduct.

Shirley brought up similar points:

> I feel I have advantages because every single teacher brings it up in English
>
> classes and they want to make sure you are citing correctly. If I do it wrong that
>
> could be considered cheating. That is the only thing I hear a lot.

She then stated "I am taking business and French classes and they do not care how I cite

it even though I try to be consistent." She stated one of her French professors passes out

different test to students and staggers the desks to combat cheating. She observed the

professor actively combating academic misconduct while assessing the students with a

test.

Consistency across all departments of the university plays a factor on making sure the message of academic misconduct from the university is consistent. Having departments that students feel like they can commit academic misconduct does not help other departments who are more stringent on their students about following the academic code.

Factors that lead students to make the choice to be academically dishonesty

Each participant was asked what factors motivate them to perform well academically. These factors are those that the participants identified people want to perform academic misconduct or what they see to be the reason their peers perform academic misconduct. The main themes that developed for the third research question were: consequences and pressure to perform well.

Consequences. Consequences refers to the participants weighing the chance of getting caught and the sanction if they were caught performing academic misconduct versus getting a bad grade on an assignment. Of the four participants that committed academic misconduct only one of them was caught by an instructor performing it and given a sanction, few participants have seen peers get caught who they knew have performed misconduct. Elaine stated "The teacher did not find out. I think they had someone write a paper for them and no one knew about it but the two people who wrote the paper." Lucy stated she was supposed to turn her paper in through a plagiarism checking software drop box. She did not turn the paper in through the website and rather emailed it to her professor. The professor accepted the paper and gave Lucy no consequences for not turning in the paper through the plagiarism checking drop box.

Two participants discussed how attitude factors into the types of consequences students expect to face if caught engaging in academic misconduct. Jerry stated "like if I got caught I am in good enough standing with my professors to say I did not realize what I was doing and get to redo it." Shirley also felt that attitude had a factor in the consequences they should receive. She stated "you have to factor in the professor's personality and how harsh they are as well as the students."

Participants discussed that the consequences of engaging in academic misconduct were worth taking the risk of getting caught by a professor. Jerry stated "I weighed the consequences of potentially getting caught and not turning in the assignment and I guess I justified it in my mind." He felt that the risk of getting caught cheating on a minor assignment was better than not turning in the assignment at all. Jerry added:

> I compare it from a minor assignment to a major assignment. I would not cheat on a big test because I know if I do get caught I will get in serious trouble. Best case is I get a zero and there goes my grade. Worst case scenario I do get kicked out of the class and there goes money and my reputation.

Ashley shared similar thoughts, although she never committed academic misconduct she stated "I learned that they sometimes do not receive consequences for doing it and they can get away with it and move on." She has witnessed other students break the academic code but then not face any consequences for those actions.

The participants have not seen themselves or students they know who have engaged in academic misconduct get caught or punished. Without witnessing or experiencing consequences for actions of academic misconduct students are likely to repeat that offense. Several participants also stated that your attitude plays a factor,

meaning if a student is apologetic or the professor feels they did it by mistake there will be little to no consequences for the infraction.

Pressure to Perform Well. Each participant was asked about what types, external or internal, pressures they are under to perform well academically. Pressure from family members, professors, and internal pressure were the most common types of pressure participants identified. Lucy stated:

> I feel like my parents are really involved in my education but I would like to do well to be able to kind of like rant on what I am doing. They might not ask but I would like to feel comfortable enough to share the information with anyone. Personal kind of motivation.

Jerry shared similar feeling in regards to what pressure he felt to do well academically. He stated:

> I feel like pressure, well there is me. I put a lot of pressure on myself. I feel like I need to do well. I feel like my family pressures me a bit, like if I do not do well they will feel disappointed and that bugs me.

Elaine was pressured by her parents and younger sister, she stated:

> It comes a lot from family. My sister is like baby genius so it is kind of like not competition but I would not want to disappoint my family basically and have them spending all of this money for no reason. They tell us we are always making them proud and just want us to do our best. So we want to do great for our parents and that's a lot of pressure.

Family and personal pressure were not the only types of pressure felt by the participants. Shirley stated she feels pressure from applying for and receiving scholarships. She stated

"Well I felt pressure because I wanted to get most of my tuition paid off." Ashley reflected similar pressure from scholarships. She stated "Scholarships also play a large role since I have to maintain a certain GPA for most of them." Lucy shared a similar feeling as Ashley and Shirley, Lucy stated, "I have a scholarship, academic excellence. I have to have a certain GPA for that." Whether in applying for or maintaining scholarships, participants felt pressure to perform well.

The final common pressure participants focused on was from their professors. Ashley said "teachers' expectations push me. If I find they have high expectations then I want to meet their expectations." Jerry shared similar experiences into instructor expectations putting pressure on him to do well, "my professors also put some pressure on me. They tell you to make sure you get papers done and they offer help so they actually make me feel they want to see me succeed." Elaine brought up professors creating competition, "some professors try to put pressure on you by talking about how you will be competing with these people for jobs in the future."

These internal and external factors put pressure on the participants to perform well academically. Only one participant acknowledged getting caught, many talked about knowing the rules but being pressured to achieve good grades. That pressure played a factor in the student's decision to engage academic misconduct in order to achieve a good grade so they would make their family proud, keep or be able to apply for scholarships, or meet professor expectations.

Students' moral development. Throughout being interviewed participants provided answers to questions that helped determine where they were in Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning. Answers to these questions gave insight to why the

participants follow the academic code and what they learned from performing acts of academic misconduct.

Two participants obeyed the academic code because they viewed it as wrong and never questioned why the academic code was there. Ashley was the only participant that did not admit to committing academic misconduct and stated "no, that is a risk I would not want to take. I do not think it is a good idea. Seeing them get away with it does not make me want to cheat or plagiarize my papers." Ashley did not articulate why academic misconduct was wrong besides the academic code of conduct tells students that it is wrong and there will be consequences if the rules are broken. Lucy, who was caught giving a friend a homework assignment to copy, stated "I just learned to not give anyone else my work or just bullshit it and tell them I haven't finished the assignment either." When asked would she do it again, Lucy stated "no, even though it was only 25 points." She would only not cheat again to not lose the points or to be punished by the instructor of the course.

One participant, Jerry, follows the code of conduct when it is in his best interest to do so. He stated:

I have committed minor things. I have never cheated on a test. I will admit I have fudged sources a couple of times. Maybe not add extra ones in that were fake, but I have gone and found ones that are sort of relevant and throw them into my paper.

When it is in Jerry's personal gain and interest to make up a few sources because he did not give himself enough time to the assignment he has done it on occasion stating "I should have put in the extra work. As I think about it I procrastinated and I am talking about all these people doing misdeeds and then I go ahead and I do them anyway." Jerry

has weighed the consequences of getting caught and know it benefits him to not follow

the rules himself when he needs to turn in an assignment on time.

Two participants were influenced morally by social relationships that have made

them question what they were doing. Shirley had encounters with academic misconduct

at an early age. She said:

> When I was younger I had a tough time because I was home schooled and had
>
> access to the answer books and my textbooks. My mom told me that she was
>
> going to give me access to both and if I started to cheat then she could tell and
>
> warned me that if I cheated in high school or college people would be surprised
>
> you made it this far if you were cheating the whole time.

She explains how her being self-motivated made her want to prove to people that she

could succeed on her own and have self-control. Prior to her mom explaining how people

would view her Shirley stated "I would cheat all the time because it is easy." Once her

mom put the expectation of cheating on her, Shirley began to stop testing authority and

began to not cheat on her assignments.

Elaine had a different influence on her moral development. She stated "I actually

was the one who wrote the papers for my friend for two classes. That was because they

were going through a really hard time. They had to go back home for certain things and

their teachers would not be flexible with him. So I did write two different papers." She

bent the rules to live up to an expectation of a friend, even if it broke the rules. Elaine

stated "I really did not feel bad because it was for a really good friend since high school.

So I did not feel bad or guilty." She justified breaking the rules to fulfill what she saw as

her duty as a friend and understood she was breaking a rule but defied the code of conduct anyways.

Each participant views breaking or following the academic code of conduct in a different way. How they justified following or breaking the academic code showed how they were morally before and after each participant's violation, whether they got caught or not.

Chapter V

Discussion, Recommendations, Future Research, Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine students' awareness of the academic code, professors' promotion of the academic code, factors that lead to students performing academic misconduct, and their moral development. This chapter will review the findings of this study, make recommendations for faculty, students, and student affairs administrators, make suggestions for future research, and identify conclusions.

Discussion

Academic misconduct and student moral development has been studied on college campuses since Drake conducted the first study in 1941. Academic misconduct has become an increasing issue both in traditional forms and with technology increasing on college campuses (Schmelkin et. al, 2008). Kahn (2006) investigated students who perform academic misconduct and found that they were in constant progression of their moral development. This study provides insight in to students' awareness of the academic code of honesty. It also looked at what causes students to perform misconduct and as a result the student's moral development.

Syllabi and Faculty. All of the participants identified that their main form of exposure to the academic code of honesty was through professors' syllabi. Professors are required to provide a statement regarding the academic code of honesty. The statement tells students where the code can be located and that they are responsible for all of the things stated in the code. Many of the participants stated that professors do not go in great detail on this part of the syllabus and simply just state it is there and students need to follow the code. This brief explanation was all the knowledge most of the participants

had of the academic code and only one of the six participants took the responsibility to

look up the code on their own. The other students admitted to never looking at the code

and could only speak about what was told to them by a professor. One participant did

share that a professor did speak to them further about the code after committing academic

misconduct on an assignment.

These college students fall into what has been labeled Generation Y, which is

anyone born from 1981-2000. This generation has also been labeled as the "gimme

generation" (Harrub, 2013). They have been given this nickname because a majority of

this generation expects everything to be handed to them without having to put in hard

work (Bower, 2003). When a professor provides students with the academic code they

should not expect that the student will go look it up in its entirety by themselves.

Students need to be told what the code is, its factors, and the consequences. Besides

reminders before some large assignments, this study found that professors are not

providing the details of the code to students. Research shows that faculty who put

emphasis on not performing academic misconduct increase the perceived risks and deter

students from performing such acts (Teodorescu & Andrei, 2009).

Limited Awareness of Code and Types. Three of the five participants had read

the academic code of honesty. One of the participants read it on his own, one had to read

it for a class, and one was caught engaging in academic misconduct and was told to read

it by a professor. The other two participants had not looked at the code (beyond the

syllabus statement) and did not know what they were responsible for in terms of

following the student standards. Professors who put the statement about the academic

code on syllabus lets the students know there is a code, but does nothing to increase their awareness of what they are responsible for under the academic code.

The most common types of academic misconduct listed by the participants was plagiarism and cheating during an in-class exam by peering at someone else's exam. In a study done by Pincus and Schmelkin (2003) 28 types of academic misconduct were discovered by university faculty. In this study the participants identified eight different types of academic misconduct. With a limited knowledge of what actions professors may consider academic misconduct, students would be more likely to perform an act against the academic code unknowingly. Students' limited knowledge of the types of academic misconduct means they are more likely to commit one of them.

With the increase in technology the chance students engaging in some form of academic misconduct are going to continue to rise. Students not being aware of the types of academic misconduct means they unknowingly engage in this activity, makes professors have to combat it more, and requires institutional intervention. . When faculty did go out of their way to inform students about specific types of academic dishonesty, especially as it related to assignments or tests in class the students were more likely to act appropriately.

Moral Development Level. Kohlberg (1971) has six stages of moral development. Kohlberg believed college students should fall in stage three or four morally. The first level of his theory is obedience and punishment orientation, an individual in this stage would avoid academic misconduct solely because they know there is a punishment associate with it. The second stage is self-interest orientation; they are focused on what is in their best interest but does not consider one's reputation or

relationships. The third stage is interpersonal accord and conformity, a student in this stage would not perform academic misconduct due to not receiving the approval from others in society. They may break the academic code if they perceive an individual will think they mean well in their actions. Finally, stage four is social order obedience. This stage deals with an individual to follow rules because they are important in maintaining a functioning society. They would view the academic code as an obligation because if one person breaks the code, perhaps every student will.

No participant could be categorized into stage four of the theory. Only two participants, Elaine and Shirley, could be categorized as falling in stage three. Lucy and Ashley would fall in stage one of the theory. Both participants follow the rules simply because they do not want to get in trouble. They know that performing academic misconduct has consequences and would not want to endure those consequences if they were to be caught. These participants were dualistic in their thinking, there was only right and wrong in their minds. Neither of them had given a deeper thought to why the rules were in place. They simply avoid participating in academic misconduct to avoid consequences that are established.

Jerry would be in stage two of Kohlberg's theory, he follows the rules when it is in his interest to do so. However, when it is not in his interest, possibly failing an assignment, Jerry stated he would perform academic misconduct. He stated when he gets lazy or procrastinates on an assignment he may perform academic misconduct to get the assignment done on time. He has not considered how he will be perceived by the professor or his peers if he was caught performing academic misconduct. Beyond

cheating benefiting him he also does it because the reward outweighs the perceived punishment Jerry would receive from the professors.

Elaine and Shirley, both in stage three, made the decisions to obey or break the academic code of conduct because they wanted to please others and were concerned about maintaining a relationship. Elaine performed academic misconduct for a friend who was in need and came upon tough times. She believed she needed to write a paper for her friend. The relationship with this individual could be tarnished if she did not write the paper for them. Elaine also felt that if she was caught someone would understand and she could rationalize it as helping a friend. Shirley wanted to obey her mother who informed her of the consequences of academic misconduct during her time being homeschooled. She wanted to appear to be a *good girl* in her mother's eyes and continues to want to be viewed that way. She also wants to be viewed that way by her current professors. Shirley and Elaine decided to act in accordance with the requests of people to please them and carry out their social role in the relationship.

Recommendations

Faculty. The biggest influence on student's awareness of the academic code is the faculty members. They are required by the institution to put a section of the academic code on their syllabi, this section directs students to where the academic code is located but does not state it in its entirety. When discussing it during class some professors do not go into detail on the various forms of academic misconduct. Informing students of the different types and consequences of academic misconduct could help combat the rise in academic misconduct. Professors should clearly communicate the expected behavior and the consequences for performing academic misconduct, not only at the beginning of the

semester, but also throughout the semester. Instructors also need to hold students accountable by confronting them and holding them accountable when they do violate policies. Students do not perceive the consequences for performing academic misconduct as outweighing the risk of performing academic misconduct. Although an increase in technology has raised the amount of acts of academic misconduct, faculty can also use this to combat academic misconduct. There are many tools out there for professors to prevent academic misconduct and these need to be utilized.

Students in this study did not seem to be in accordance with where Kohlberg (1971) believed they should be morally. Faculty members can play a large role in a student's moral development. Faculty should be challenging and educating students within the classroom and then encouraging them to question and discover for themselves. If the students are not being taught to question and discover things for themselves, we cannot expect them to develop to a moral stage where they do not just follow the academic code because they know there are consequences associated with performing academic misconduct.

Students. Students are not aware of what they are responsible for in regards to the academic code of conduct. Professors put the code on the syllabus and may briefly cover it in class. The expectation is that students will take it upon themselves find out about this academic code, but in reality this does not happen. Students that attend college are a part of a generation that is expected to be given everything, including what constitutes as academic misconduct and what does not. Developmentally students are learning to be competent for themselves and being given directives would help them understand what they can and cannot do. When students are clearly informed about the code by multiple

faculty, and told to review the policy they will be more likely to take the time to read the document in its entirety.

Morally, students should also begin to question why the rules of the academic code are put in place. Students at the level in their academic careers should be above stage two of Kohlberg's (1971) theory of moral development. Student's should not just be viewing things as black and white, but developing a deeper understanding for social agreements and when those can be changed, if ever. Students need to begin to think of things on the global scale and not just how their actions affect them individually.

Student Affairs Administrators. None of the students mentioned Student Affairs professionals having any impact on them in regards to obeying the academic code. These individuals are the people who see the students the most outside of the classroom and not having any influence is not acceptable. They are educators just as much as the faculty in the classroom and need to take this responsibility seriously, and this begins by learning about and understanding the academic misconduct policy and the various forms students may commit. They can support the education of the academic code by implementing it into their training of their staff members that have interactions with students. Awareness of the code could be increased by having conversations with student staff, having signage about the code, and discussing what falls under the realm of academic misconduct.

Professionals in the New Student Programs office would be key in increasing the awareness and education of the academic code to the students. During orientation they have the attention of each incoming student for the next year. During this orientation there should be a presentation on an in-depth view of the academic code. Student staff could discuss their experience with the academic code and what they have witnessed

personally or through observation of peers within the classroom. The staff could also discuss the types of misconduct with the incoming students to make them aware of the types they may have not learned in high school or even be aware of that are considered academic misconduct.

Fraternity and Sorority Life staff could aid in the education, awareness, and enforcement of the academic code. Fraternities and Sororities are often accused of passing class notes from year to year includingtests, homework, or anything that may be beneficial to other members who take a course taught by the same professor. This staff could have meetings with their organizations to remind them of the academic code and that passing these documents to other members is against the academic code. They can increase the awareness and education of the code discussing it with the advisors of this group and asking them to talk to their organizational members about the academic code. They could also hang the academic code in the houses and take a zero tolerance stance on any infractions against the code.

The Housing department should perform training with their professional and resident assistant staff on how to confront and have discussions about academic misconduct that may occur in their learning community. During the beginning of the year floor meetings the staff could also mention the importance of following the academic code when they review the rest of the policies in the student handbook. Throughout the year, the housing staff could do educational bulletin boards or put the academic code as part of the policy signs that are hung throughout the hall. These would serve as additional reminders to students throughout the year.

Future Research

      Faculty. This study looked at the students' perspective on academic misconduct, another way to investigate would be to get the faculty perceptions of students' academic misconduct habits and moral development. Another study would be to look at how faculty feel they promote the academic code, their department's stress on the academic code, and how they handle academic misconduct violations in their classes. These studies could be done with a professor from each individual college or only focus within a specific college. A researcher could get both the faculty and students perspective from an individual class and look at the differences between how the faculty and students feel academic honesty is promoted in the classroom. An alternative could be to look at how the promotion in an entry level course compares to the promotion in a higher level course and how violations are handled by the faculty who teach those courses. The study could also be open up to look at faculty at the Community College level.

      Students. Two of the participants in this study had been caught while performing academic misconduct future research could look at students who have been caught by their professor and went through a conduct hearing with the Office of Student Standards. Another alternate would be to select participants from all one major, college, or who are all taking the same class and compare their experiences with the professor's promotion of the academic code. Finally, a researcher could do a longitudinal study and interview a group of students starting their first year in school and conduct an interview every semester until the student graduates. This study would look at the promotion of the academic code and the individual student's moral development throughout their four years at a university.

Conclusion

The participants in this study did not have a high awareness for what the academic code was and what they were responsible for regarding it. Based on observations by the participants, their peers do not appear to have an awareness of what all the academic code entails. The professors' approach to putting a blurb on a syllabus does not seem to be enough with this generation of college students. The students need to be told exactly what they can and cannot do in regards to academic misconduct. This study helps to further understand how administrators and faculty need to explain in detail what students are responsible for and assumptions cannot be made about what they know about academic misconduct. Kohlberg developed his theory in 1971 and identified that students should be in the third or fourth moral development stage. This does not appear to be the same for this generation. Their level of morality is lower than one might anticipate and a cause for the increased rate in academic misconduct. This low morality, combined with the lack of detection and firm consequences from professors seems to keep academic misconduct at a high rate. Administrators also can take part in the education of students and should be engaging and creating programs to help students think about morality.

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Appendix

Table 1

List of Academic Dishonest Methods

Collaborating with others on an assignment that was individual work

Copying homework

Copying information without utilizing quotation marks

Copying material without proper footnotes or citations

Cutting and pasting material from the Internet and submitting it as one's own

Delaying taking an exam or turning in a paper due to a false excuse

Downloading a complete term paper from the Internet and submitting it as one's own

Failing to report a grading error

Falsifying or fabricating a bibliography

Forging a University document

Giving answers to someone else during an exam

Giving exam question to students in a later section

Having someone else write a term paper for you

Hiring a ghostwriter

Inputting information or formulas needed for an exam into a calculator

Not contributing a fair share in a group project

Obtaining a copy of the exam to be given prior to class

Obtaining a test from previous semesters

Plagiarizing

Purchasing a term paper to be turned in as one's own

Sabotaging someone else's work

Stealing or copying a test

Studying from someone else's notes

Submitting the same term paper to another class without permission

Taking a test from someone else

Using crib sheets

Utilizing a term paper or exam from a fraternity or sorority test file

Utilizing a tutor or writing center inappropriately

Writing a term paper for someone else

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What kind of a student were you in high school?
    a. Describe what you mean by (good, average, above average, etc.)
2. What kind of student are you, now? How have you changed since high school?
    a. Describe what you mean by (good, average, above average, etc.)
3. What has influenced your ability to do well in school?
4. What pressure is put on you to perform well academically?
    a. Where does the pressure come from (family, friends, faculty, finances, etc.)
5. Are you competitive with others on campus to do well academically?
    a. Who are you in competition with on campus?
    b. Describe this competition
    c. Are there people off campus you feel you are in competition with? Describe.
    d. Where do you think you are in relationship to these others?
6. Do you consider yourself an honest person? Why or why not?
    a. Describe why you think you are an honest person?
7. What types of academic dishonesty are you aware of?
    a. Describe. Define.
    b. How did you learn about these? Who, what etc. told you about them?
    c. Develop your list of ones you think most should be aware of
8. Does this institution have an academic code of honesty?
    a. Have you been told or read the academic code?
    b. Where did you learn about the academic code?
    c. Who showed it to you? Or where did you first read it?
9. Why do you think the institution has an academic code of honesty?
10. Have any of your professors reviewed the academic code in your classes?
    a. Is the code provided in this syllabus?
    b. Have any of your instructors gone over the academic code as they cover the syllabus?
    c. Do your professors define the types of academic dishonesty?
    d. Do your professors state what they expect for each assignment?
    e. How often do your professors remind you of the academic code?
11. Do you think some departments emphasize the academic code better than others? If so, which ones?
12. Do your professors define what academic dishonesty looks like?
    a. Do they review it for each assignment?
    b. How often do they remind you of the academic code?
13. What types of technology are you aware of that your professors use to combat academic misconduct?
14. Have you ever heard of a professor enforcing the academic code?
    a. What did they do?
    b. What was the violation?
    c. What was the outcome?

      d. Was it enough? Do you think the person and/or your classmates learned from the situation?

15. What should be the punishment for academic misconduct?
16. How much emphasis do you feel the university puts on the academic code?
17. How much emphasis do you feel your professors put on the academic code?
18. Have you known anyone who committed academic misconduct?
    a. What was their relationship to you? (No names)
    b. What happened to them?
    c. What did you learn through this experience?
19. Have you ever been caught committing academic misconduct?
    a. What types?
    b. Have you ever committed academic misconduct and not been caught?
    c. How did you feel while you were committing the academic misconduct?
    d. How did you feel after you had committed the academic misconduct?
    e. How do you feel today about what you did?
    f. What did you learn about yourself in this situation?
20. Did you get caught performing academic misconduct? What were the ramifications?
    a. What happened to you?
    b. Who knew about this?
    c. What factors led you to perform academic misconduct?
21. If you got caught, what did you learn from the experience?
22. How much emphasis do you feel your fellow classmates put on the academic code?
23. What should faculty, staff, the "institution" tell students about academic misconduct?
24. Is there anything else you want to share with me today?

Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

Age:
Gender:

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

Grade Point Average?

- ○ 3.75-4.0
- ○ 3.5-3.74
- ○ 3.25-3.49
- ○ 3.0-3.24
- ○ 2.75-2.90
- ○ 2.5-2.74
- ○ Below 2.5

On-Campus Housing

- ○ Andrews
- ○ Douglas
- ○ Ford
- ○ Lawson
- ○ Lincoln
- ○ McKinney
- ○ Pemberton
- ○ Stevenson
- ○ Taylor
- ○ Thomas
- ○ Weller
- ○ Greek Housing

Major: