Senior Education Students' Understandings of

Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

A Dissertation

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by

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Abstract

Academic dishonesty has been widely reported to be a prevalent occurrence among university students and yet little research has been done to explore, in depth, the meanings the phenomenon holds for students. In response to this gap in research, the purpose of this study was to discover senior Education students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty. A naturalistic research design was employed and the data were the verbatim discussions of five groups of senior Education degree program students from two western Canadian universities.

Findings were focused on the substantive, structural, and future applicability in students' understandings. Essential elements of academic dishonesty appearing in students' understandings were existence of rules, intent to break those rules, and resulting unearned grade advantages. These elements were extrapolated to serve as a baseline definition of academic dishonesty and as principles of culpability. Numerous situational considerations were volunteered by students that described enticements, deterrents, and beliefs about likelihoods associated with academic honesty and dishonesty. These considerations served as structures for the contemplation of risk that appeared prevalent in students' understandings. Future applicability in students' understandings was centred on expectations for teaching and professionalism. As teachers, students expected to need to respond to and prevent academic dishonesty. When working in a professional environment, they expected little need to acknowledge sources and a more collaborative climate overall that, for them, meant concerns for academic dishonesty had less relevance. Students' expectations suggested rules for teaching and they contrasted the environments experienced as students with those anticipated as teachers.

The findings of this study were integrated to suggest students' vision of a system for academic honesty that bears some similarity to a moral system. Also extrapolated were four metaphors for the roles of students in the university related to concerns for academic dishonesty: student as subject, student as moral agent, student as trainee, and student as competitor. Implications for higher education policy development and communication were based on students' focus on grades and students' sense of subculture for academic honesty and dishonesty. Students' deference to the authority of the professor suggested implications for instructional practice. A lack of monitoring of students' and professors' behaviours related to academic honesty and dishonesty had implications for administrative practice in terms of fostering norms for academic integrity. A model for discernment of the student voice is proposed for student

concerns appearing to be most freely and richly explored in a discussion among students. Recommendations for approaches to future research of this nature and for research questions and student populations bring the dissertation to a close.

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Dedication

For Mom and Dad

— Joan and Bob Bens —

Thank you for making everything possible.

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CHAPTER ONE
THE RESEARCH QUESTION

This study focused on university students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty. In this chapter I present the research problem followed by the purpose of the study and the research questions that guided it. Then, the significance of the study to the field is presented followed by an explication of what I have brought to this study as researcher. I provide a description of my assumptions and the delimitations and limitations that have bounded this study. Definitions of terms relevant to this study, an overview of the organization of the dissertation, and a summary conclude the chapter.

Background to the Problem

The importance of academic honesty as an ethic in higher education is made clear in this excerpt from a 1995 statement of "Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities" made by Princeton University:

> The ability of the university to achieve its purposes depends upon the quality and integrity of the academic work that its faculty, staff, and students perform. Academic freedom can flourish only in a community of scholars which recognizes that intellectual integrity, with its accompanying rights and responsibilities, lies at the heart of its mission. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and action is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe. (Center for Academic Integrity, 1999, p. 5)

While this question may eloquently state the ethic of integrity so important to academe, research on prevalence of dishonesty among college and university students consistently shows that academic dishonesty is a problem in higher education. A discourse on academic dishonesty has increased in profile over the last 20 years, according to Drinan (2009). He observed that many universities have become engaged in addressing the issues and attributed their attention to the concern academic dishonesty presents for the essential missions of teaching and research. To attend to these matters, added Drinan, it takes both courage and coordination.

In a review of research conducted in the 1990s, McCabe, Trevino and Butterfield (2001a) revealed that findings demonstrate that "cheating is prevalent and that some forms of cheating have increased dramatically in the last 30 years" (p. 219). Other reviewers (Crown & Spiller, 1998; Whitley, 1998; Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002; Christensen-Hughes & McCabe, 2006a) also suggested that research has shown that incidents of academic dishonesty are pervasive. To

address a lack of research on prevalence in the Canadian context, Christensen-Hughes and McCabe (2006b) conducted a study of eleven Canadian higher education institutions (ten of them universities) that used students' self-reported behaviours to conclude that 18% of the undergraduates had engaged in one or more instances of serious test cheating behaviour, 53% had engaged in one or more instances of serious cheating on written work, 45% were certain another student had cheated during a test or exam during the past year and another 20% suspected such cheating. The five most common cheating behaviours reported were: working with others when asked for individual work (45%), getting questions and answers from someone who had already taken a test (38%), copying a few sentences of material from a written source without footnoting (37%), copying a few sentences from the internet without footnoting (35%), and fabricating or falsifying lab data (25%). Even with these seemingly high rates of academic dishonesty, only 18% of undergraduate students agreed or strongly agreed that cheating is a serious problem. Contrasting the seriousness attributed to academic dishonesty by 18% of students in the study, of the faculty and teaching assistants (TAs) surveyed, over 40% agreed or strongly agreed that cheating was a serious problem at their institution. Christensen-Hughes and McCabe concluded that, as has been suggested in similar research in the United States, academic dishonesty "may be a serious problem in Canadian higher education" (p. 18).

The research suggests that academic dishonesty among students is indeed prevalent in higher education and that trends show that "cheating is widespread and on the rise" (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2001a, p. 220). As concerning as such findings should be to educators, the concern should perhaps be even graver when, as Cizek (1999) pointed out, research indicated that deviant behaviours are typically underreported, even in conditions of anonymous surveys. Extending the problem beyond educational institutions, Nonis and Swift (2001) examined the relationship between academic dishonesty and workplace dishonesty and found that students who engaged in dishonest acts in college classes were more likely to engage in dishonest acts in the workplace. If universities are to meet their academic and societal missions, addressing the issue of academic dishonesty among students should be of paramount importance. Twomey, White, and Sagendorf (2009) acknowledged that questions of academic dishonesty can at first appear familiar and straight forward, but cautioned that simplistic appraisals overlook real complexity making it necessary to "interrogate the assumptions the simple answers take for granted" (p. 5).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover senior undergraduate Education students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty. To do so I aimed to gain detailed insight into how the issues were perceived by students in the context of other aspects of their experiences in higher education. Then, as interpreter of what was voiced by students, my task was to describe their understandings in terms of content, influences, and application; to generate plausible insights; and to propose grounded conclusions and practical and theoretical implications that related to the students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty.

The Research Questions

To achieve the above purpose, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What is the substantive content of senior undergraduate Education students' expressed understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty?
2. How do senior undergraduate Education students structure their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty?
3. What do senior undergraduate Education students anticipate their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty mean for them as future teachers?

Significance of the Study

Whitley and Keith-Speigel (2002) provided the following reasons that educators should be concerned about academic integrity and these also serve as justifications for conducting research in this area:

1. students who cheat may be getting higher grades than they deserve;

2. when students see others cheating without consequence, they may decide it is acceptable or at least permissible;

3. students who cheat do not acquire the knowledge or experiences to which their degrees attest and society expects;

4. students' morale suffers when they see peers cheat and get away with it leading to cynicism about the higher education enterprise;

5. faculty morale suffers when feelings of personal violation, a lack of administrative support, and stress associated with dealing with dishonesty lead them to a similar cynicism about higher education that their students may feel;

6. students' future behaviour tends to be affected by past behaviour and thus undetected cheating in the past may lead to future cheating in educational or professional practice;

7. reputation of the institution is affected when associated with dishonest activity;

8. public confidence in higher education is lost and faith is lost in academia when they see the effects of failing to addresses academic dishonesty. (pp. 4-6)

In addition to these assertions and their implicit reasons for studying students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty, the findings of this study enrich understandings in the field of educational administration related to this phenomenon in important ways. This enrichment results from addressing questions largely unexplored in the literature, employing methods rarely used in this area of inquiry, and focusing on an issue of current activity and interest in both higher education and in Canadian society at large. Each of these areas, which speak to the need for the current study, is described below.

Unaddressed Questions in the Research Literature

Most of the research done in the area of academic honesty and dishonesty is about prevalence of acts of academic dishonesty among students. Donald McCabe, a professor of Management at Rutgers University, has been one of the most prolific researchers in this area. His work, and that of his co-investigators, is widely cited in the literature. McCabe identified the distinguishing methodology of his research as the use of large scale, multi-campus, multivariable surveys (McCabe, 1992; McCabe & Trevino, 1993, 1997; McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield, 1999, 2001b; Christensen-Hughes & McCabe, 2006b). These studies focused on self-reported incidence of behaviours and the severity with which respondents regarded those behaviours. As early as 1998, reviewers of academic dishonesty research, Crown and Spiller, characterized the research in the field as an overabundance of studies focusing on the quantification of academically dishonest behaviours and sought to stimulate "researchers beyond simply quantifying cheating" (p. 694). To contrast findings from quantitative studies that have painted the more distant and aggregate picture of issues of academic dishonesty a detailed view acquired in natural settings of students appeared to be needed.

There is little we know from the research literature about what the defining ideas or key considerations are for students when it comes to their understandings and meanings with respect to academic honesty and dishonesty. Christensen-Hughes and McCabe (2006b) in their study of students at 11 Canadian higher education institutions found substantial differences exist in the views of students and faculty for several behaviours commonly defined as academic dishonesty. They concluded that the beliefs about what constitutes academic dishonesty are a particularly important issue for research in this area. Without understanding how students make sense of these issues and experiences, how can educators hope to affect student attitudes and behaviours or effect change in what they experience in the learning environment? As Pickard (2006) put it, referring specifically to plagiarism, "such a complex issue requires a more detailed insight into aspects of the phenomenon" (p. 218).

This dissertation responded most directly to the call of Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne (1997) for studies into the meanings that students' ascribe to their experiences with academic honesty and dishonesty. As these researchers pointed out over a decade ago, research had not dealt with the question of how academic dishonesty is conceived and understood within the student world. They identified and critiqued an assumption in much of the research at that time that the concept of academic honesty and dishonesty was clearly understood and agreed upon by those experiencing the phenomenon. Although they called on future researchers to take a phenomenological approach so as to enter the student life world and access students' lived experiences with academic dishonesty, the study by Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne (1997) remains one of only a few studies to have looked exclusively at what academic honesty and dishonesty may mean to students. For this reason, their study—although focused strictly on concerns of plagiarism—was an important guide to the present study of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty.

Methodological Significance

The sample and the data collection method were relatively unique in the research literature on academic honesty and dishonesty. The sample of students was from two universities where most often, studies taking a qualitative approach have been conducted at a single institution (e.g., Payne & Nantz, 1994; Ashworth, Bannister, & Thorne, 1997; Hall & Kuh, 1998; Parameswaran & Devi, 2006; Devlin & Gray, 2007). To narrow the sample further, the population consisted of Education students nearing graduation, a student group who had

limited attention in the literature (exceptions wherein Education students were studied include Ferrell & Daniel, 1995; Johnston, 1996; Derryberry, Snyder, Wilson, & Barger, 2006). The data collection technique used in this study added to the methodological significance in that most often individual interviews have been used (e.g., Ashworth, Bannister & Thorne, 1997) and focus groups are used to a far less extent. (Focus groups were used by Hall and Kuh, 1998; and Devlin and Gray, 2006.)

Importance for Higher Education and Society

The problem of academic dishonesty has received attention in the Canadian popular press and in national higher education magazines. The Canadian higher education news magazine, *University Affairs,* has published three articles on concerns for students' academic dishonesty with the titles *Cheating to Win* (Mullens, 2000*), The Cheat Checker* (Charbonneau, 2004), and *Cheating Themselves* (Gillis, 2007). The 2007 article, which followed the publication of the results of the Christensen-Hughes and McCabe (2006b) study, included this statement: "Students who cheat are a problem on Canadian campuses—a problem that universities and faculty members must wrestle head-on" (Gillis, 2007, p. 10). This statement echoed the sentiment expressed in the earlier articles.

A national news magazine, *MacLean's*, reported on the Christensen-Hughes and McCabe study using the provocative headline "the great university cheating scandal." The article positioned the study and the problem as one of societal importance (Gulli, Kohler, & Patriquin, 2007). Suggesting a lesser commitment to quality to be apparent in universities compared with corporations who recall substandard products to protect the public and to maintain credibility, the article included this statement:

> Universities are in the business of producing graduates—the doctors who will heal us, the engineers who will build our bridges and the CEOs who will generate our wealth. The degrees they confer are the university's certificate that a graduate has completed a required course of study, and that he or she has been tested and deemed suitable by appropriate authorities. Yet a recent University of Guelph study has discovered that more than half the student body in Canada is cheating its way through school. And there is no recall. There is not even a great sense of urgency around the problem. The value of a degree is being debased, and there is mounting evidence that a lack of integrity in the university system will have a far-reaching effect on our economy in the years to come. (p. 32)

I argue that the statement that "half the student body in Canada is cheating its way through school" is not supported in the literature (self-reports do not suggest students are consistently cheating as a way to complete their degrees) and that positioning universities as in the "business of producing graduates" is a framing that is worthy of critique. The prospect that the Canadian public is losing its confidence in the integrity of the credentials of our postsecondary institutions should be a real concern to educators and educational administrators in all sectors of education, not only universities. Further loss of confidence will be deserved if the findings of Sims (1993) and Nonis and Swift (2001) hold true; that those who are academically dishonest as students are more likely to engage in workplace dishonesty later in life.

Research has also identified societal trends in technology that have impacted academic dishonesty. Auer and Krupar (2001) stated that the "proliferation of paper mills, full-text databases, and world wide web pages has made plagiarism a rapidly growing problem in academia" (p. 415). Gismondi (2006) called on researchers to re-examine issues of academic dishonesty in the modern context of new technologies, asserting that "internet technology has opened up a wide range of ethical dilemmas for students" (p. 3). In contrast, McKeever (2006) pointed out that while exponential growth of the internet has presented new ways and new ease for cheating, it has also made it much easier to detect. A controversy at Ryerson University in Toronto about the use of a social networking site highlighted the new context presented by technological advances. In that case, students saw themselves as collaborating and assisting one another in their learning but from the point of view of some members of the faculty and administration at Ryerson, it had been an attempt to collude (Millar, 2008). In short, there is evidence that the context for academic dishonesty has shifted significantly in the past decade and is deserving of research attention.

In summary, the problem that has led to this study is that there is strong evidence that many higher education students engage in academic dishonesty suggesting that the value of academic honesty that most—if not all—universities would espouse as central to their educational, scholarly and societal missions is not being enacted. After an initial review of relevant research and societal attention regarding academic honesty and dishonesty, I concluded that in depth explorations of students' understandings were few in number and research of such a nature was needed to better understand the complexities of the issues at hand.

Researcher Perspective

My professional background and current academic pursuits are rooted in my concerns and hopes for the experience of students in higher education. Ultimately, I feel my interests are of a largely practical nature. Having worked in support of students in first year experience programming, recreation and residence life, student clubs and government, leadership development programming, in academic advising, and currently as a director of student support services, my professional life has been filled with conversations with students about what they hope for and what they experience in higher education. In my current role I have also advised a number of students charged with academic dishonesty and helped to prepare them to engage with judicial hearings or appeals. Because of these varied experiences in a student affairs career of nearly two decades, I recognize that the experience of students is important to me not only for the fulfillment of individual possibilities but for the service of the public good that is achieved when members of a society are well-educated.

My many individual and group conversations with students have led me to believe that there is sometimes a gap in what institutions of higher education and their various subgroups *want* the student experience to be and what the experience *is* for students. I believe that often those employed by the institution are unaware of the gap. Educators and educational administrators may mistakenly assume that students hold understandings, knowledge, or skill sets common to their own. Kuh and Whitt (1988) identified scholars with a similar interest in misalignments to be "demythologizers," people who underscore the discrepancy between what should be and what is in organizations and who assert that ambiguity and uncertainty are inherent in organizational life. For me, it is obvious those of us who want to positively impact the experience of students in universities must find ways to access what I call the student voice and then learn from and respond to that voice. The meaning I ascribe to the notion of the student voice is explicated in the third chapter in which I present the research method in depth. Recommendations for a model for the discernment of student voice are made in the final chapter.

Assumptions

A number of assumptions were made and may be reflected in the conduct of this study. First, because research findings from other institutions suggested that between one third and three quarters of students have engaged in serious academic dishonesty, and yet, at universities like the University of Saskatchewan with a student body of over 18,000, typically fewer than 100

cases are brought forward to formal hearings annually, I assumed that students would be aware of high rates of both undetected or unaddressed academic dishonesty. I also assumed that students would have only vague familiarity with the institutional policy and more familiarity with the expectations and occurrences at the level of their program of study or individual courses.

Second, it was assumed that students would be able to describe what they understand about academic honesty and dishonesty and their experiences in their learning environments. Even if students had not specifically previously considered the phenomenon of academic honesty and dishonesty, their statements would reveal their understandings and reflect their experiences. Within this assumption was the belief that students' ways of understanding academic honesty and dishonesty would be socially constructed and that the context of students' stories would be important. Related to this second assumption was a third assumption that students would be able to provide a rich description of what they understand and that they would be able to do so in the context of a group discussion with their peers.

A fourth assumption was that academic integrity is valued in universities and regarded as fundamental to the achievement of academic missions. Related to this, a fifth assumption was the assumption that universities value academic integrity for reasons of reputation and credibility—that is, their reputation as places of higher learning and the credibility of their degrees.

Sixth, there was an assumption that students from different universities but in the same field of study have more in common than students from the same university and in different fields of study. The rationale for this assumption lay in the similar curricula of the degree programs, similar career aspirations of the students, and the shared academic culture of professors from the same field of study or discipline.

A seventh assumption reflected a social constructionist epistemology and ontology that students' understandings about academic honesty and dishonesty are socially constructed and what students perceive as real is what is real. Thus, knowledge is assumed to be subjective and the findings of this study are expected to be constructed both from the unique perceptions of the individual students and myself.

Delimitations

I placed the following delimitations on the study:

1. Sample: Students from a common field of study formed the sample so as to reduce the number of variables in the data. The students were senior Education students who were enrolled in programs that typically prepared them to teach children and youth in the K to 12 education system. Most, but not all, had completed their student teaching/practicum placements. In part, this population was chosen because as future teachers they would hold important roles in other learning environments. Understandings and perceptions of others who were involved in and shaped the learning environment, namely professors, instructors, teaching assistants, and other staff who facilitate student learning like librarians, tutoring and supplementary instruction professionals, or student affairs personnel were not included in this study.

2. Location: The University of Alberta and the University of Saskatchewan were selected based on their offering of Bachelor of Education programs, their similarity in institutional mandate, and the convenience of their locations.

3. Number of participants: Initially, six student discussion groups were conducted, three at each campus. One of the University of Alberta focus groups had to be eliminated because the contact information of students in that group had become out of date and transcript releases could not be gathered. This situation meant that five focus groups which included a total of 17 students participated in the tape-recorded discussions that resulted in the data for this study.

4. Timelines: Data were collected at a time that did not coincide with exam periods nor with teaching practica so as to make the opportunity to participate available to as full a range of students as possible.

Limitations

The following limitations are acknowledged in this study:

1. My ability as a focus group facilitator to create the conditions for meaningful discussion that generated rich and accurate expressions by participants is likely unique to me.

2. My ability to interpret the intended meanings of the statements of participants regarding their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty is likely unique to me.

3. An unknown self-selection bias exists among students who participated in this study. Students who volunteered to participate in a study on this topic using methods of this type may have particular characteristics or perspectives that affected or determined the meanings conveyed that are unique in some unknown way.

4. Findings that resulted from focus groups with Education students from the two selected campuses are contextually based, and thus transferability to other settings or groups of students is limited.

Definitions

The following terms and phrases are used in this dissertation and my definitions of these are presented below:

Academic honesty is achieved when academic work is completed authentically by the person or people who execute the work using permitted resources and in a manner that appropriately acknowledges the work and ideas of others.

Academic dishonesty is the opposite of academic honesty. Specifically, it has to do with the acts and/or behaviours that an institution or an instructor identifies to be in breach of established standards for academic honesty. Typically included are exam cheating, plagiarism of written work, fraudulent reporting or explanations, and other selected activities that may be said to hamper fellow students' access to learning and opportunity for fair assessment.

Academic integrity is understood to be the commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility among members of the learning environment as these relate to the means for the completion of academic work. Therefore, academic integrity encompasses academic honesty.

Academic integrity, academic honesty, academic dishonesty, or academic misconduct policies are the formal institutional documents, variously named, that are meant to guide faculty, staff and students in defining and considering cases of academic dishonesty.

Senior undergraduate Education students are those university students enrolled in their final year of a Bachelor of Education degree program at the University of Alberta or at the University of Saskatchewan.

Students' understandings are what students, directly or indirectly, indicate that an idea, concept, notion or word means to them; the aspects they say influence that meaning; and the applications they see for their understandings in the future.

Focus group is the format of group interview including two or more people plus the researcher that was used in this study to discover students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty.

Professor is the term used throughout this study to refer to the employees of the universities who teach students in undergraduate courses. It encompasses all those who provide instruction through in-person or distance means, regardless of title or status.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into seven chapters. This chapter is the first and serves to introduce the research problem. The second chapter consists of a review of the literature; the third, a description of the methodology. Next are three analysis chapters in which I present findings that address the three research questions respectively. The final, and seventh, chapter includes my summary, integration, and discussion of the findings as well as their implications for the future.

Chapter Summary

This first chapter was devoted to the research question. I have described the interest in the field of

higher education concerning issues of academic honesty and dishonesty and I have highlighted the importance of this topic for the educational mission of universities. The purpose of the study was described to be to discover senior undergraduate Education students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty. Research questions that guided the study were presented and centre on the substantive content of students' understandings, the structure of their understandings, and the anticipated application of their understandings. The significance of conducting a study with this purpose and method was described as having the potential to address a lack of research that reveals students' understandings, meanings, and experiences with the phenomenon of academic honesty and dishonesty by employing lesser-used qualitative methods and techniques. As researcher, my perspective was described in terms of my background as a student affairs professional and my interest in the gap between what universities want the student experience to be like and what it is for students. Assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and definitions were made explicit so as to present the boundaries and vocabulary for the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research in the area of academic honesty and dishonesty has been largely focused on matters of incidence as highlighted in Chapter One. While this research informed my interest in the topic, little insight into students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty was provided by such reports. Thus, I have conducted a review of research that focuses on the phenomenon of interest—students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty. My purpose in presenting this review of the literature is to situate the study described in this dissertation in a broader scholarly context and in such a way that it is clear that this study has built upon previous research and has addressed a new, or at least under-examined, area of scholarship.

To demarcate the scope of the review, I have relied on a number of comprehensive literature reviews (McCabe & Trevino, 1996; Crown & Spiller, 1998; Whitley, 1998; McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield, 2001a; Park, 2003; Christensen-Hughes & McCabe, 2006a). I have searched the Center for Academic Integrity bibliography, conducted internet and database searches, and reviewed higher education literature and theories of student development. The breadth of my reading in these areas of scholarship has allowed me to recognize research that had as its aim, or as its by-product, findings related to students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty and having potential implications for the field of educational administration.

The review is presented in four sections that address four questions, respectively: what is known about how students define academic dishonesty, what is known about how students explain the occurrence of academic dishonesty, what is known about the influences on students' understandings of academic dishonesty, and what is known about the bases for students' judgments about academic dishonesty? The major headings used to present a review of selected research and literature in these areas are: (1) students' views of what constitutes academic dishonesty, (2) students' explanations for acts of academic dishonesty, (3) students' perceptions of their peers and academic dishonesty, and (4) bases of students' judgments about academic dishonesty. Each of these four major sections is concluded with a summary that includes assertions as to the relevance of the content to the present study. It is important to note that this review was done largely following the first complete analysis of the data so as to be consistent

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with a phenomenological approach to research in which I attempted to bracket the research literature and my own biases from the research process (a method discussed in Chapter Three). As a result, the literature reviewed in this chapter was chosen in response to the preliminary trends and patterns noted in the first phase of data analysis and is intended to be specific to the purpose of the study—to discover senior undergraduate Education students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty.

Students' Views of What Constitutes Academic Dishonesty

Dishonesty is not a concept that lends itself to simple definition (Scott & Jehn, 1999). Inconsistency in the definition of behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and diverse understandings of academic dishonesty in academia as a whole have been identified as one of the main issues emerging from the literature (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003). In this section, I review selected studies that have focused on the ambiguity of academic dishonesty for students and how they rank the severity of various acts of academic dishonesty.

Ambiguous Nature of Academic Dishonesty for Students

Nuss (1984) suggested that one of the major problems regarding academic dishonesty is the lack of clear definitions of what constitutes academic dishonesty and the diverse meanings it holds for different individuals. This situation seems to be particularly true for matters concerning plagiarism (McCabe & Trevino, 1996). Several researchers have found that students consistently regard some behaviours as clearly constituting academic dishonesty. That is, the definition of cheating in some instances is unambiguous to students—especially those acts that take place in exam settings. Other behaviours, however, are highly ambiguous to students and subject to a wide range of interpretations. For example, according to Park (2003), several researchers have found that distinguishing between plagiarism and paraphrasing is particularly difficult for students to grasp. In this section the relevant findings of seven studies are reviewed—three that examined students' definitions of academic dishonesty (Higbee & Thomas, 2002; Christensen-Hughes & McCabe, 2006b; Burrus, McGoldrick & Schuhmann, 2007) and four others that focused on understandings of plagiarism (Ashworth, Bannister & Thorne,1997; Barrett & Cox, 2005; Parameswaran & Devi, 2006; Yeo, 2007).

Students' Definitions of Academic Dishonesty

Higbee and Thomas (2002) analyzed the written comments of 227 students (and 251 faculty) who responded to a survey about definitions and severity of forms of academic

dishonesty. Specifically, their purpose was to understand attitudes toward selected behaviours that might not be strictly defined as cheating, or toward situations for which circumstances may determine what is honest and what is dishonest. Consistent with the reported ambiguous nature of this phenomenon, Higbee and Thomas focused on less obvious forms of cheating and allowed respondents the option of indicating that their opinion might depend on specific circumstances. The questionnaire items they developed are provided below to illustrate the ambiguous nature of some of the concerns for what constitutes an act of academic dishonesty:

1. When typing a paper for a friend, changing words or phrases in order to improve how the paper reads
2. Discussing a paper with a friend while in the process of writing it
3. Discussing a paper with a friend who is in the same class and is writing on the same subject
4. Changing laboratory results to reflect what the results should have been
5. Turning in the same paper for different courses during the same quarter
6. Turning in the same paper for two different courses during different quarters
7. Turning in two different papers based upon the same library research for two different courses
8. Studying from old exams from the same course and professor
9. Maintaining a test file of old exams for students in an organization to use to prepare for exams
10. Asking someone who has already taken the same exam (e.g., during an earlier class period) about what is on the test
11. Making arrangements with other students to take turns going to lectures and taking notes
12. Purchasing lecture notes from a note-taking business to supplement one's own notes
13. Purchasing lecture notes from a note-taking business instead of going to class
14. Copying lecture notes from a friend after missing a class
15. Asking another student how to do a homework assignment
16. Collaborating with other students to complete homework assignments
17. Preparing for exams with a study group in which each person develops review materials for a portion of the course
18. Including an article in a reference list when only reading the abstract
19. Asking someone to proofread a draft of a paper for writing course and circle errors
20. Asking someone to correct a draft of a paper for a writing course
21. Asking someone to proofread a draft of a term paper and circle errors
22. Asking someone to correct a draft of a term paper

23. Using published summaries and/or study guides to assist in understanding reading assignments
24. Using published summaries and/or study guides instead of reading assigned works of literature
25. Watching videotaped films of famous works of fiction rather than reading an assigned book. (p. 42)

Respondents were asked to respond to each item on the survey indicating whether it constituted academic dishonesty and were given the option to respond that "it depends." Space was provided to specify circumstances that might dictate their response. For some items there was more agreement between groups than within each group and in all cases but four, faculty more often indicated "it depends" in relation to an act, suggesting they see more room for interpretation regarding academic dishonesty than do students. An analysis of the open-ended responses highlighted several contested ideas regarding turning in the same paper twice, talking to someone who has already taken the exam, collaborating on homework, and proofreading versus correcting. Higbee and Thomas concluded that there is much confusion regarding what behaviours are considered acceptable in the academic community, featuring a distinction made by one faculty respondent about activities that hamper a student's learning compared with activities that misrepresent what is learned and which may impact other students. They regarded both the inter-group and intra-group disagreement to be of note in this study. That is, faculty opinions and expectations differ, meaning that students get an array of messages from their professors.

Christensen-Hughes and McCabe (2006b), in their study of students at eleven Canadian institutions of higher education, found that while there was considerable agreement amongst participants as to acts that constituted academic misconduct, of the 24 behaviours that were rated in their study, one that consistently was rated as either not cheating or trivial cheating was sharing an assignment with another student to use as an example from which to work. Six other behaviours were rated by the majority of respondents as either not cheating or trivial cheating: (1) working on an assignment with others when the instructor asked for individual work, (2) receiving forbidden help on an assignment, (3) hiding library or course materials, (4) fabricating or falsifying lab data, (5) using a false excuse to obtain an extension on a due date, and (6) getting questions and answers from someone who has already taken a test. These authors also found four of the above six behaviours were among those most commonly reported, suggesting

that if students do not regard an act to be one of academic dishonesty, they may (understandably) feel more free to engage in it.

Burrus, McGoldrick, and Schuhmann (2007) asked students to report on their own cheating in anonymous and voluntary surveys before a definition of academic dishonesty had been provided and, then again, after a definition had been provided. The definition defined cheating as submission of work that is not one's own, giving or receiving prohibited aid from other persons or materials, use of prior knowledge of the contents of the test or quiz without the authorization of the instructor. Students reported significantly more cheating post-definition, with the percentage of students reporting at least one incident of cheating increasing from 39% to 53%. That is, some students recognized more of their previous behaviours to qualify as cheating once they had been exposed to the definition. Responses to the pre-definition questions provided further insight into the ambiguity that students experience with academic dishonesty as well as pointed to how the context of what constitutes cheating can change in a particular class based on the policies of individual professors. For example, glancing at another student's exam paper was considered cheating more often than asking a classmate about a take-home exam question. Likewise, studying from an old exam was considered cheating more often than comparing answers with or getting help from a classmate on an assignment. These authors concluded that students in their study did not fully comprehend what constitutes academic dishonesty and that the definitions they were operating under were, at best, incomplete.

Students' Definitions of Plagiarism as a Type of Academic Dishonesty

Much ambiguity surrounds matters of plagiarism, according to the research in this area. Park (2003) declared that plagiarism is ambiguous because it covers a range of situations, degrees of violation, and requires understanding attribution of originality, distinguishing what constitutes common knowledge, and then referencing according to conventions. Because of the lack of understanding among students, the issue of inadvertent versus intentional acts of plagiarism as a form of academic dishonesty contributes powerfully to the uncertainty (Yeo, 2007). Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne (1997), Barrett and Cox (2005), Parameswaran and Devi (2006), and Yeo (2007) conducted studies about students' understandings of plagiarism. The relevant findings of each are highlighted in this section.

Ashworth et al. (1997) found that students find it difficult to understand what constitutes plagiarism and that they are anxious that they might commit plagiarism by accident. According

to these researchers, students seemed to have "no hint of the idea that scholarship is a communal activity, to which each contributed, acknowledging the contributions of others" (p. 200). Instead, they found students to be "perplexed as to why academic staff tend to be so uptight about this issue" (p. 200). The students saw correct referencing more in terms of academic etiquette and polite behavior rather than embracing the idea that "scholarship is a communal activity to which each contributes, acknowledging the contributions of others" (p. 201). Students in their study, while definitely aware of a notion called plagiarism, were unsure about what actions would qualify in this category. Some conceived of plagiarism in very literal terms as strictly the copying of portions of text without attribution and saw paraphrasing without referencing as a qualitatively different offence. Students were unsure about how to follow correct procedures when making use of others' text or ideas in their own work. More than one admitted to continuing to be uncertain well into their academic careers and finding published guidelines for referencing difficult to comprehend. Further, there seemed to be a unanimous fear that plagiarism could occur by accident.

A study about the distinction that students and faculty make between collaboration and collusion by Barrett and Cox (2005) revealed that students found it difficult to discern what constitutes plagiarism. They reported students tended to categorize acts of copying the work of other students as collusion or, even more favourably, as collaboration rather than plagiarism. While students and faculty in their study agreed that collusion was a less harmful offence than plagiarism, the lack of shared definitions was suggested by Barrett and Cox to be a valid concern for those striving to promote and enforce academic honesty.

Parameswaran and Devi (2006) found that few engineering students who deliberately reproduced another student's lab report—perhaps incorporating minor amendments to values—and submitted it as their own called what they did copying. In their study which involved 30 in-person interviews, three focus groups, and a 6-month period of observation of engineering students, they found that students use of others lab reports in completion of their own as rarely equating to replication or copying *per se* but as processes for understanding, referring, and checking. For understanding, students said they read the reports of others for knowledge. For referring, students use other's reports as guides to avoid errors and confirm procedures. For checking, after students' reports are complete they compare their answers to those of others to ensure accuracy and to make any needed changes. Parameswaran and Devi called on future

researchers to refine notions of student plagiarism to include distinctions between replicating, understanding, referring and checking that were apparent in students' understandings.

In Yeo's (2007) study using surveys completed by 190 first-year science and engineering students, she sought to determine students' needs in the development of appropriate understanding of plagiarism and academic skills by exploring their thinking and decision-making processes. The survey asked students to define plagiarism, to say what penalties should be applied, and to make judgments about six scenarios that were developed to represent different elements of plagiarism in contexts the students would find familiar. Yeo designed the scenarios to reflect what she called "an ill-defined line between what some regard as legitimate learning activity and an attempt to compromise the assessment process" (p. 204). Following each scenario, respondents were asked about whether the acts described had been plagiarism ("yes," "unsure," or "no"). If the response was yes or unsure, students were asked how serious they regarded the act to be ("minor," "moderately serious," "very serious"). Yeo found that almost half of students expressed a good understanding of the elements of plagiarism. Of those students thought to have good understanding, more focused on the lack of acknowledgement than on the effort to deceive. Most notable in the findings (of which others are reviewed later in this chapter) is Yeo's conclusion upon reviewing students' written analyses of the scenarios: students' knowledge about plagiarism in the abstract (according to the definition they provided) appeared to have had little influence on how they viewed or defined the elements in the scenarios. That is, commentary based on the scenarios was similar between students who had better and worse apparent understandings of the definition of plagiarism, suggesting to Yeo that students do not know how to apply the understandings they purport to real life circumstances.

Students' Perceptions of Severity of Academic Dishonesty

Not only is there ambiguity for students around the definition of academic dishonesty, the seriousness with which students regard an act appears to affect whether they view it to be academically dishonest. Three studies are widely cited in the academic dishonesty literature that compared faculty and student ratings of severity of various acts of academic dishonesty through questionnaire techniques. Both the study by Graham, Monday, O'Brien, and Steffen (1994) and by Sims (1995) presented faculty and student respondents with a range of behaviours and asked them to rank them according to severity, including that the behaviour should not be considered academic dishonesty. Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995) conducted a similar study but did

not set out to examine matters of severity. They found course-work related dishonesty was regarded as less serious than exam-related dishonesty. This finding is consistent with faculty views as reported in a study of faculty perceptions by Pincus and Schmelkin (2003). In both the studies by Graham et al. (1994) and by Sims (1995), faculty viewed the acts of agreed upon academic dishonesty as more severe than did the students. This finding suggests that students understand academic dishonesty to be less of a serious matter than do those who instruct them.

A later study by Sims (2002) reported on the increase in severity with which two groups of students regarded plagiarism scenarios after the implementation of a university-wide certification of authorship statement. One group responded prior to the implementation of a university-wide policy, and the other group responded four years after the implementation. The certification of authorship was applied to all out of class written assignments and read as follows:

> I certify that I am the author of this paper and that any assistance I received in its preparation is fully acknowledged and disclosed in the paper. I have also cited any sources from which I used data, ideas, or words, either quoted directly or paraphrased. I have added quote marks whenever I used more than three consecutive words from another writer. I also certify that this paper was prepared by me specifically for this course.
> Student's Signature: _____ (p. 482).

The students who had been required to submit the certification of authorship throughout their university career assessed the scenarios containing behaviours defined as plagiarism at their university as more severe infractions than had a group of students four years previously, who had not experienced the policy.

Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne (1997) found that students made a distinction between types of assessment and the related gravity of cheating. These authors characterized students as holding reverence for the exam scenario, seeing it as "powerfully symbolic" (p. 199). The regulations about the layout of the room, formalized invigilation, and exclusion of certain materials or technologies from the examination room signified the importance of the fair conditions of the assessment to students in their study. If these formalities are not maintained, these authors asserted that students interpret that the assessment is not considered important by faculty, making students feel freer to cheat without guilt.

Summary of Research on Students' Views of What Constitutes Academic Dishonesty

A common definition of academic dishonesty is lacking in research and within academic communities. The findings reviewed in this section suggest that some definitions of academic

dishonesty are fairly clearly understood by students while others are less so. Research has shown that students very clearly understand some acts of academic dishonesty—especially those associated with exam settings—while other acts typically regarded as academic dishonesty are found to be highly ambiguous by students—especially those related to matters of plagiarism. These findings are relevant to the study described in this dissertation because they support the need for a study that seeks a more principle-based definition of academic dishonesty from students' own lived experience. Specifically, these findings confirm that research is needed that does not presume that the meanings of academic dishonesty are unequivocal or complete (Ashworth et al., 1997; Burrus et al., 2007), that research is needed to explore how students and faculty define academic dishonesty in different contexts (Higbee & Thomas, 2002; Burrus et al., 2007), and that research is needed to understand the impact of students' ethical or moral judgment on their decision-making in relation to academic dishonesty (Yeo, 2007). Further, in each study reviewed above, students categorized pre-set acts, scenarios, or vignettes related to academic dishonesty, many of which were intentionally set out as complex or contestable. In each case, arguably by design, the studies revealed that many acts typically regarded as academic dishonesty appear ambiguous in nature to students. Students were not asked outright for how they defined academic dishonesty in their learning environments. None of the studies reviewed here have taken an approach driven by students' own meanings and definitions to discover students' understanding of academic honesty and dishonesty—a gap in the research the present study sought to address.

Findings suggest that in the majority of cases students and professors are in agreement about what acts constitute academic dishonesty and that both consider acts of academic dishonesty to exist on a continuum of severity. However, while students recognize much behaviour as academically dishonest according to studies reviewed in this section, they have been shown to regard acts of academic dishonesty to be less severe or problematic than do their professors. The degree to which students find academic dishonesty to be a problem, and what kind of problem they regard it to be, should be a key concern in understanding students' understandings about academic honesty and dishonesty. Consistent with the view of Ashworth et al. (1997), an assumption of consensus of the meaning of cheating is problematic and research is needed to deal with the "questions of precisely how cheating is conceived and understood within the student world" (p. 188). They went so far as to claim that without discovering the

various meanings of cheating with the students' life-world, other measurement tools to investigate cheating are premature.

Students' Explanations for Academic Dishonesty

Numerous studies have investigated the explanations students give for engaging in academic dishonesty. In this second section of the chapter, I review literature that addresses the question, what is known about how students explain why academic dishonesty occurs. I have organized this research using two main headings: (1) students' reasons for academic dishonesty, and (2) students' rationalizations for academic dishonesty.

Students' Reasons for Academic Dishonesty

Understanding why students cheat has been a prevalent interest in the literature on academic dishonesty. Some researchers have used qualitative approaches to delve into the reasons students engage in academic dishonesty. For example, Payne and Nantz (1994) explored 22 students' social accounts and their use of metaphors when discussing their own cheating behaviour. Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne (1997) accessed 19 undergraduate students' understandings of plagiarism using in-depth interviews. McCabe, Trevino and Butterfield (1999) analyzed 971 responses to an open-ended question in a larger study that asked for students' views related to academic integrity. Yeo (2007) surveyed 190 first year science and engineering students' for their understanding of plagiarism. Devlin and Gray (2007) reported on a series of group interviews of 56 Australian university students about the possible reasons for plagiarism at their institution. Based on my integration of the categories provided by these authors, and others (referred to below), I have grouped the reasons for academic dishonesty, as identified by students, into the following seven categories.

1. *Improve Grades.* Students cite a need to improve their grades so as to pass (Franklyn-Stokes & Newstead, 1995; McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 1999), to have a competitive standing compared to others (Payne & Nantz, 1994), and to simply receive a higher grade than they might have otherwise (Ashworth et al., 1997) as reasons for students' choice to engage in academic dishonesty.

2. *Improve Efficiency.* Students explain academic dishonesty as a means to save time and energy according to Park (2003), Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995), Payne and Nantz (1994), and Parameswaran and Devi (2006). Further to this, Park (2003) found that students reported feeling overtaxed by the many calls on their time in terms of extracurricular activities,

family life, and pressure to complete multiple assignments in short amounts of time and that these pressures make them vulnerable to cheating as a means to save time and energy. Some students in Devlin and Gray's (2007) study suggested that laziness and the convenience of plagiarism contribute to the decision to cheat.

3. *Coping Strategy:* McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield (2001a) acknowledged the considerable pressure students are under to do well and that these pressures can lead to decisions to engage in academic dishonesty. Ashworth et al. (1997) found that students said that normally hardworking students may be driven to resort to academic dishonesty on occasion. Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995) found that students feel pressure to help friends who are in academic difficulty and demonstrate a strong ethic of peer loyalty in terms of helping their peers cope. Devlin and Gray's (2007) student-participants described coping with various pressures as well as education costs as being a reason for plagiarism. The educational cost was framed as the expense of having to retake a failed course being so great that students will do anything to pass. Parameswaran and Devi's (2006) students explained the copying of lab reports as too difficult to complete alone and that often the lecture explaining the concepts of the procedure occurred after the lab, not before.

4. *Defiance of Authority*: Graham et al. (1994) concluded, after examining reasons students do and do not cheat, that students view the classroom as a reciprocal process and that "when faculty are unfair students see this as a violation of the rules, and thus feel freer to cheat" (p. 257). Students may feel mistreated or disrespected and find the prospect of academic dishonesty a form of rebellion (Ashworth et al., 1997), a challenge or point of pride (Devlin & Gray, 2007), a method to object to an assessment task (Park, 2003), or a way to "even things up" when students perceive professors or other students to be acting unfairly (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002). McCabe, Trevino and Butterfield (1999) noted that their findings have suggested that when students observe faculty overlooking or treating lightly cases of academic dishonesty, some convince themselves that they cannot afford to be disadvantaged and therefore cheat to level the playing field since they believe others are cheating.

5. *Worthwhile Risk:* Students believe they know the risks of academic dishonesty and in some cases believe the rewards outweigh the risks (Ashworth et al., 1997; Park, 2003; Payne & Nantz, 1994). Michaels and Miethe (1989) reported that students are most prone to cheat when they perceive the risk of being caught as small. Likewise, students in the study by Parameswaran

and Devi (2006) expressed the belief that it was unlikely lab assistants would take the time to try to prove the copying they suspected had occurred, with some even citing occasions when lab assistants advised them to change their answers enough so as not to get caught by the professor. The notion of calculated risk when it comes to academic dishonesty was explored in an essay by Woessner (2004) about gaming theory and academic dishonesty. He concluded that unless academic dishonesty is seen to be an unsafe gamble for students, it is rational that they will try to beat the odds. Buckley, Wiesey, and Harvey (1998) found that respondents in their study of business undergraduates perceived the probability of being caught as an influence on behaviour. Respondents perceived the average university student would engage in unethical behaviour 76% of the time if the probability of being caught was zero; 30% of the time the probability of being caught was 50%; and only 4% of the time if the probability of being caught was 100%.

6. *Deficient Academic Skills:* Devlin and Gray (2007) noted some students explained student academic dishonesty as being due to inadequate ability or skills upon admission. Because students do not understand plagiarism or citation and referencing conventions, students are asked to perform at a level that is beyond them and without a genuine understanding of scholarship and referencing requirements commit unintentional violations (Park, 2003).   One international student in the study by Devlin and Gray (2007) suggested that students coming from other cultures and with first languages other than English were particularly uninformed about the practices to avoid plagiarism. Other academic skills brought forward by students as reasons for plagiarism in that study were a lack of time management and research, writing and referencing skills.

7. *Situational Factors:* Graham et al. (1994) concluded that students cheat for situation-based reasons and not because their values are consistent with cheating. Students in the study conducted by Parameswaran and Devi (2006) about copying lab reports explained copying as due to faculty inaction. Students said they copied because they believed faculty did not do anything and therefore must expect it, faculty did not care because the lab reports have little effect on the final grade, and that faculty want students to refer to others lab reports to learn from their example. Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne (1997) found students had a lot to say about factors that facilitate cheating. Specifically, students in their study reported that certain forms of cheating are comparatively easy to get away with because students believe it to be impossible for faculty to follow up based on the sheer numbers of students they would have to deal with.

Different forms of assessment offer different opportunities for cheating, and related to that, ease of cheating differs between disciplines according to students. They also found that group work situations provoke questions over the assessment of levels of contribution.

These seven categories of reasons provide some level of insight into what students understand about individual choice and learning environments on a broader scale in relation to academic dishonesty. While there is overlap, these explanations may be said to be either of a more intrinsic nature (students' individual desire for achievement or response to felt pressures as in points 1, 2, 3, and 6) or of a more extrinsic nature (students' beliefs about the world around them as in points 4, 5 and 7).

Students' Rationalizations for Academic Dishonesty

Reasons for academic dishonesty become rationalizations when rather than proposing an explanation for a behavior, they are put forward as justifications for the behavior. The predominant categorization scheme employed in research on students' justification of academic dishonesty has been *techniques of neutralization* as articulated by Sykes and Matza (1957) but other rationalizations have also been noted. Research revealing students' rationalizations for academic honesty and dishonesty are reviewed below.

Students' Use of Techniques of Neutralization for Academic Dishonesty

Techniques of neutralization are those used by violators of some norm or law to justify the act, possibly in advance of performing the act, and allowing the violator to see the act as valid but not by the law or society's norms. These techniques may serve to "protect the individual from self-blame and the blame of others after the act" (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 666) thus neutralizing or deflecting blame in advance. The techniques of these major types are summarized below, including a representative phrase and some further explanation:

1. Denial of Responsibility: "I didn't mean to do it." The violator claims acts to be unintentional or due to outside forces. The violator sees him or herself as helpless and as acted upon rather than as the actor.

2. Denial of Injury: "I didn't really hurt anybody." The violator claims that no harm has been done by the acts and therefore should not be regarded negatively. It is an attempt to break the link between acts and their consequences.

3. Denial of the Victim: "They had it coming to them." The violator insists that the injury is not wrong in light of the particular circumstances. The act is viewed as a punishment

or justified retaliation, suggesting that the violator can determine what is deserved and what is not. The violator becomes the avenger and the victim the wrong-doer. A distant, unseen, and abstracted victim may also be denied.

4. Condemnation of the Condemners: "Everybody's picking on me." The violator shifts the focus to the motives and behaviours of those who disapprove, expressing cynicism against those assigned the task of enforcing or expressing the norms of a dominant society.

5. Appeal to Higher Loyalties: "I didn't do it for myself." The violator explains the act as a sacrifice in the face of a conflict between the demands of the larger society and the demands of the smaller social group to which the violator belongs. More pressing or compelling particularistic norms are accorded precedence over universal ones, like claims of friendship over claims of law (Sykes & Matza, 1957, pp. 667-669).

Analysis of student responses in terms of their use of these techniques of neutralization about academic dishonesty has been conducted in a number of studies. Labeff, Clark, Haines, and Diekoff (1990) and McCabe (1992) analyzed descriptive responses to surveys of self-reported cheating while Storch, Storch and Clark (2002) compared the use of techniques of neutralization between athletes and non-athletes and Vandehey, Diekhoff and Labeff (2007) reported on cheaters' consistent agreement with neutralizing statements over 20 years at the same institution.

Both the Labeff et al. (1990) and McCabe (1992) studies assessed narrative responses about forms of cheating on major exams, quizzes and class assignments, as well as the perceptions of and attitudes held by students toward cheating and the effectiveness of deterrents to cheating. In Labeff et al.'s study, narrative data from 149 admitted student cheaters were examined and classified into three of the five techniques described by Sykes and Matza (1957). These researchers speculated that to deny injury or deny the victim is less likely when the one who is cheating argues that cheating is a personal matter rather than a public one. Such a neutralizing attitude "allows students to sidestep issues of ethics and guilt by placing the blame for their behaviour elsewhere" (p. 196), allowing them to state that cheating is generally wrong but acceptable and even necessary in some circumstances. In their study, denial of responsibility was most often cited and talked about in terms of outside forces like peer pressure to cheat, time pressure, unfair disadvantage due to illness, lack of success in the past combined with pressure for grades, inadvertently hearing other students cheating, and accidentally seeing another

student's test paper. Appeal to higher loyalties was apparent when students said they engaged in dishonesty in order to help a friend or a peer, or allowed others to view a paper but did not regard their behaviour as a violation. Condemnation of the condemners was most often directed at authority figures. Students described dishonest behaviour as occurring in reaction to the perceived dishonesty of the authority figure such as professors who were negligent in some way, teaching and assessment practices thought to be unfair, and unrealistic expectations by faculty. Also cited were family pressures and societal pressure to succeed at all costs.

Using similarly gathered data, McCabe (1992) reviewed the open-ended responses on a survey he administered to over 6,000 students at 31 highly academically selective universities across the United States in 1990-91. Over two-thirds of those surveyed reported cheating on a test or major assignment at least once while an undergraduate. More than 400 respondents (only 11% of them admitted cheaters compared with 67.2% of total respondents) offered their own justifications for cheating in responses to an open-ended question on motivations for cheating. Of the 426 responses to this question, 354 were classified into one of Sykes and Matza's five categories of neutralizations. The responses included in this analysis indicated that the rationalization preceded the cheating incident. Denial of responsibility was used in 61% of the comments, followed by condemnation of condemners at 28% and a distant third and fourth were appeal to higher loyalties at 6.8% and denial of injury at 4.2%. Common responses indicating a denial of responsibility were instances of mind block, no understanding of the material, a fear of failing, and unclear expectations of assignments. Condemnation of the condemners included explanations such as pointless assignments, lack of respect for individual professors, unfair tests, parents' expectations, and unfair professors. Those few whose responses indicated an appeal to higher loyalties to explain behavior cited helping a friend and responding to peer pressure. Denial of injury occurred among the smallest number of students, only 15, who dismissed their cheating as harmless since it did not hurt anyone or it did not matter because, for example, an assignment accounted for a small percentage of a total course grade. McCabe concluded that these findings confirmed the use of neutralization techniques by students who have self-reported academic dishonesty—especially the more frequent use of denial of responsibility and condemnation of the condemners—and has extended them as his study included a much larger sample size from multiple institutions. He suggested fruitful discourse could be achieved

between faculty, administrators, and students by exploring the validity of these justifications to pursue improved appreciation for matters of academic integrity.

A study by Storch, Storch and Clark (2002) had a three-fold purpose: (1) to examine the self-reported frequency of academic dishonesty in a sample of student athletes and non-athletes; (2) to describe the extent to which neutralization techniques are used, and (3) to examine the main effect and interactional relationship between the four neutralization techniques and cheating behaviours in student-athletes and non-athletes. The study included 244 undergraduate students consisting of 80 intercollegiate athletes and 164 non-athletes from a large public research university. Storch et al. (2002) administered a self-report questionnaire to assess neutralization techniques using a 5-point likert scale to all students in six randomly selected classes that had relatively high numbers of student athletes enrolled. The study focused on four techniques of neutralization offered by Sykes and Matza (1957): denial of responsibility, denial of injury, condemnation of condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties (excluding the denial of a victim). They found that athletes reported higher rates of academic dishonesty compared to non-athletes and athletes employed denial of responsibility, denial of injury, and appeal to higher loyalties more frequently as well. Those student athletes justifying cheating using an appeal to higher loyalties, reported the highest rates of cheating behaviours, possibly because some athletes experience a strong loyalty to the notion of a "team" and commit deviant behaviours to assist or be part of a team. The researchers speculated that the greater incidence of cheating among athletes may have related to different time pressures related to competitive sport. They presented an interpretation that athletes possess a mentality that "it's only illegal if you get caught" and that a mentality that may govern sport competition may be spilling over into the academic context for these students.

Vandehey, Diekhoff and LaBeff (2007) examined university students' behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs related to academic dishonesty using data collected from the same institution in 1984, 1994, and 2004. One of the most consistent findings of their research has been that cheaters more strongly endorse eleven statements that neutralize cheating behavior than do non-cheaters. The statements began with "Jack should not be blamed for cheating if…" and were then followed by:

1. the course material is too hard.
2. he is in danger of losing his scholarship.
3. he doesn't have time to study.

4. the instructor doesn't seem to care.
5. the instructor acts like his/her course is the only one.
6. his cheating isn't hurting anyone.
7. everyone else in the room seems to be cheating.
8. the people sitting around him made no attempt to cover their papers.
9. his friend asked him to help him/her cheat.
10. the instructor left the room.
11. the course is required.   (p. 473)

The statements most strongly endorsed in all three data collections years were those that deflected blame to the instructor ("the instructor doesn't seem to care," "the instructor acts like his/her course is the only one") and failure to respond to or prevent cheating ("everyone else seems to be cheating," "the instructor left the room").

Students' Use of Other Rationalizations for Academic Dishonesty

Ashworth et al. (1997); Moore (2002); and Yeo (2007) are among the researchers who have described students' rationalizations in ways other than techniques of neutralization. Ashworth et al. (1997) found that if the "victim" of students' cheating was conceived of in personal terms, students were less ready to cheat than if the victim was unknown or abstract. Students in their study also commented that some actions classed as cheating are allowed or even encouraged by faculty, an explanation that could be categorized using the techniques identified by Sykes and Matza (1957) as condemnation of the condemners.

Moore (2002) described the ways 12 students reflected on their own academically dishonest behaviours for which they were being punished. The students were made to participate in a non-credit group that specifically encouraged reflection about students' ethical behavior through issues of being trusted and being lied to, analysis of cases and relevant newspaper clippings, reading of short stories, and completion of questionnaires on attitudes toward cheating. Questionnaire responses indicated that the students believed cheating was wrong. Through assignments, Moore found that students had an initial tendency to blame others or to minimize the seriousness of their academic dishonesty by relating the behaviour to outside pressures (a practice of rationalization that could also be called denial of responsibility in Sykes and Matza's, 1957, terms). In the blaming others, one said a teacher had not adequately explained plagiarism and its consequences; while another felt misled that a teacher would be lenient and felt betrayed when instead the teacher applied the policy strictly (as per condemnation of the condemners).

Another claimed his behaviour was actually collaborative learning and not academic dishonesty (as per denial of responsibility).

Moore (2002) was struck by what she regarded as students' considerable interest in the question of who precisely is hurt by cheating. She said that, by far, students saw cheating as compromising what they themselves might learn in the course, but not as hurting others (thus denying the existence of another victim). She probed the students about the unfair advantage over others to which they conceded harm when there was a curving of grades. None of the students appeared to "experience self as a member of a community with shared values, nor did anyone suggest that cheating could have a generally demoralized effect on the community" (p. 27). And yet, students believed that the institution had an "obligation to articulate and uphold proper standards of right and wrong, even if students sometimes disobeyed them" (p. 27). Students compared this to a family where it is a responsibility of parents to establish rules, uphold positive values, and reject negative values. Moore (2002) speculated that this belief on the part of the students explained why they seemed to go to such lengths to distance themselves from the circumstances of their own academic dishonesty. She interpreted that students cheated to find an easier way of accomplishing their academic tasks and not as an act of defiance or a challenge or game of some kind.

In Yeo's (2007) study wherein students responded to a scenario not commonly recognized as plagiarism, students seemed to apply their own ethical or moral judgment. Sometimes this meant they condemned the plagiarist but more often they suggested leniency or even that the act had been justifiable. Perhaps a reflection of the students' understanding that many forms of plagiarism are less severe, students largely felt faculty should handle cases themselves rather than turning to institutionally sanctioned penalties which were too harsh in their view. Students also appeared to believe that students were subject to different academic rules depending on the field or discipline in which they were studying or the types of assignments or assessment techniques that were applied. A lack of explicit instructions from faculty in the scenarios also led students to resort to their own moral or ethical judgment rather than scholarly/academic values.

Summary of Research on Students' Explanations for Academic Dishonesty

Research has shown that students can provide explanations for academic dishonesty. Their explanations take multiple forms and reveal that students believe much is at stake for them

personally in their learning environments. Taking the findings reviewed in this section together, I have summarized these into seven overarching types of reasons for academic dishonesty offered by students and have framed them as students might voice them:

1. I cheat because I need certain grades to get ahead in this world;
2. I cheat because I need to make good use of my time and effort;
3. I cheat to cope with all of the other pressures I face as a student;
4. I cheat because other students do it and my professors don't seem to care;
5. I cheat because I think there is a low risk of getting caught;
6. I cheat without knowing it because I do not understand the rules nor do I have the skills to follow them; and
7. I cheat because some of the situations I am in present an easy opportunity to do so.

While the purpose of this study was not to explore the reasons students engage in academic dishonesty *per se*, the research reviewed in this section supports the assumption that students are able to contemplate the choices and contexts in which they come to understand academic honesty and dishonesty. The ways students have explained, justified, or rationalized academic dishonesty in previous research can inform and enrich the meanings discovered in the present study. More specifically, these findings offer plausible insights into how students' in the present study may understand academic honesty and dishonesty and how they decide to conduct themselves in relation to academic honesty and dishonesty.

Students' Perceptions of their Peers and the Influence on Academic Dishonesty

As pointed out by Hall and Kuh (1998), "acts of academic dishonesty do not occur in a vacuum but in environments marked by competing and sometimes conflicting values and desires" (p. 3). Student peer culture in higher education has been defined by Kuh (1995) as the processes and norms that guide the formation of groups of students in which members identify, affiliate, and seek acceptance over a prolonged period. Because peers have the greatest influence on students' attitudes (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 2005) and since believing peers approve of cheating correlates with increased cheating behaviour (McCabe & Trevino, 1997), students perceptions of their peers likely influences students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty. I have organized this section using three main headings: (1) the role of peer social norms, (2) the role of perceived outcomes for those who cheat, and (3) the role of honor codes in students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty.

Role of Peer Social Norms

Students who perceived social norms as permissive of cheating cheated to a greater extent than those who perceived the norms to be unsupportive of cheating according to the findings of 16 studies reviewed by Whitely (1998). Hard, Conway and Moran (2006) situated their study of beliefs about student academic misconduct in social norms theory which suggests that students will tend to maintain behaviour consistent with their perception of how other members of their social group behave. That is, believing that others are cheating to a greater extent will lead students to increase their own cheating behaviours so as to be more like their peer group.

Hard et al. (2006) attempted to apply this theory to academic dishonesty behaviours by surveying 166 undergraduate students at a mid-size American public university. The survey consisted of two questions, using a 5–point Likert-type scale about 16 behaviours: "how frequently have you engaged in each behaviour?" and "how frequently do you believe other students typically engage in each behaviour?" Results indicated, among other things, that overall, students rarely engaged in academic dishonesty but that, indeed the vast majority (90%) still had engaged in at least one of the 16 behaviours at least once. However, for each of the behaviours students estimated them to occur more often among their peers. The researchers concluded that this finding formed strong evidence that students overestimate the occurrence of academic dishonesty. This overestimation may have important implications for interventions and may have particular effect in highly competitive academic environments where students perceive achieving higher grades to be vital to their future aspirations.

In a study of engineering students by Parameswaran and Devi (2006) and students' questionable reliance on the lab reports of others, learning how to get access to lab reports was seen as being to students' advantages. Students were described as occupying one of three roles for obtaining lab reports. *Gatherers* were those that well in advance tapped their social network so as to gather as many reports as possible and therefore they had the largest collection. *Hunters* had smaller collections because they only began searching once the class involving the labs had commenced. *Scavengers* borrowed labs from friends at the actual time that labs were conducted or lab reports were due and therefore they had the smallest collection, with possibly only one or two reports for reference. Gatherers were at the greatest advantage and the least often caught for plagiarism because they had more reports to refer to for accuracy and quality and also could use

the content of the reports to vary the appearance of their own. Students in this study reported the copying of lab reports as routine and believed "everyone knew they did this" (p. 268).   The only students found not to have copied were those in first year. Senior students explained this phenomenon not as an ethical commitment or fear of punishment on the part of new students, but rather as not knowing the norm that "everybody is doing it" or as having not made enough friends to share resources in this way.

Role of Perceived Outcomes for Those who Cheat

In their research, Hall and Kuh (1998) found that within a few weeks of attending an institution, students in their study learned that other students were cheating. Cizek (1999) asserted that across all the categories of correlates of cheating that he has described, among the most consistent and strongest predictors of cheating behavior were perceiving that others are cheating to a greater extent and believing that those who cheat have been successful. As noted earlier in this section of the chapter, some students explain academic dishonesty as a worthwhile risk based on what they believe the outcomes are for those who cheat (Ashworth et al., 1997; Park, 2003; Payne & Nantz, 1994; Michaels & Miethe,1989).   Fostering academic integrity and therefore responding to academic dishonesty was asserted by Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) as a basic responsibility for professors. Voicing a similar concern for the seeming failure of both professors and institutional policies, McCabe and Drinan (1999) said:

> Many students now live in environments where other students cheat regularly, where faculty members either don't notice or don't want to notice, and where students who cheat face trivial penalties–if any. In such a climate, many students conclude that they would be foolish not to cheat, a little bit. (p. B7)

Parameswaran (2007) cited Canadian findings by Genereux and McLeod (1995) that students identified two of the five most influential determinants of their cheating were instructors' views (care/don't care) and instructors' vigilance (high/low). Pointing to another Canadian study, Parameswaran noted a finding by Paterson, Taylor and Usick (2003) that faculty indifference to cheating sends the message that if caught cheating, pretending to be stressed or ignorant of the rules easily lets them off the hook. Students who see cheaters get underserved grades find it unfair to honest students and their own morale and performance is affected, which may influence them to start cheating (Whitley & Keith Spiegel, 2002).

Role of Honour Codes

Studies about aspects of educational settings that correlate to academic dishonesty have been conducted, many of them with Donald McCabe as principal investigator, with the majority examining the role of honour codes. Such codes typically explicitly state expected behaviours and the consequences of not conforming to the code. The traditional format for honour codes includes provisions such as non-proctored exams, a pledge or certification of authorship attesting to the integrity of students' work, and a strong (often exclusive) student role in the judicial system. Some encourage or even require students to report when they suspect others of being academically dishonest.

McCabe and Pavela (2000) pointed to noteworthy positive trends found on campuses that have academic honour codes but conceded that the majority of institutions with academic honour codes in the United States are smaller and tend to be private rather than public. More recently, a study by Arnold, Martin, Jinks, and Bigby (2007) comparing six "character building" colleges, as identified by the John Templeton Foundation, found there were not significant differences among honor code and non-honor code institutions in terms of the incidence of academic dishonesty, but students from honor code institutions perceived that the incidence of academic dishonesty at their institution was lower. Hall and Kuh (1998) noted that smaller, religiously affiliated, and selective institutions such as those studied in research on honor codes operate in contexts where they have been able to clearly articulate their values and attract compatible students.

In a study of more than 4,000 students by McCabe and Trevino (1995), 54% of students on honour-code campuses admitted to one or more incidents of serious cheating compared to 71% on campuses without a code. Twice as many students at no-code institutions admitted to serious cheating on exams as did those from honour code institutions. According to McCabe and Pavela (2000), the most important elements seem to be significant student involvement in developing and maintaining honour codes, penalties with an educational rather than punitive emphasis, and an assumption that students are capable of behaving in an ethical manner. In their analysis of longitudinal trends, McCabe and Trevino (1996) concluded that the explanation for the success of honour codes is that:

> Students consistently indicate that when they feel part of a campus community, when they believe faculty are committed to their courses, and when they are aware of the policies of their institution concerning academic integrity, they are

less likely to cheat. The social pressures not to cheat in such an environment, although not insurmountable, are substantial….Students at honor code schools talk about cheating as being "socially unacceptable," and how "embarrassed" they would be if their friends knew they had cheated, about how they "would not violate the trust" placed in them by the faculty and their school, and about how they care about their "relationships with [their] professors." (p. 33)

Although honour code institutions generally have shown lower incidence of self-reported academic dishonesty, McCabe and Trevino (1993) found an interesting contradiction to that generalization when among nine institutions studied, the reverse was true: "One of the lowest levels of cheating occurred at a school that lacked an honor code, and one of the higher levels of cheating occurred at a school that had a long-standing honor code" (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2001a, p. 224). The former institution had a culture that encouraged and endorsed academic integrity where the latter, despite its 100-year-old honour code tradition, "failed to adequately communicate the essence of its code to students and to indoctrinate them into the campus culture" (p. 224). The insight gained from this apparent paradox is that values of academic integrity must be strongly embedded in the student culture, and a formal code is not the only way to achieve this result. They found that a culture of academic integrity existed on the one campus, despite its lack of a formal code: "administrators and faculty clearly conveyed their beliefs about the seriousness of cheating, communicated expectations regarding high standards of integrity, and encouraged students to know and abide by rules of proper conduct" (p. 224). The most important question to ask, according to McCabe and Trevino (1996) is how an institution can create an environment where academic dishonesty is socially unacceptable.

Summary of Research on Students' Perceptions of their Peers and the Influence on Academic Dishonesty

Students' perceptions about their peers behavior in relation to academic dishonesty appears to influence what they think about academic dishonesty and what they self-report having done in relation to academic honesty and dishonesty. That is, when students perceive that the campus culture tolerates cheating, they are more likely to cheat (Hall & Kuh, 1998). Efforts to affect students' perceptions of their peers behaviours and beliefs and their perceptions of what will be permitted in the learning environment, have been shown to make a difference to students' own self-reported behaviours. To this end, the practice of promoting academic honesty through honour codes and other educational programming aimed at creating a campus ethos of academic

integrity has been shown to yield positive results in the form of fewer incidents and fewer self-reported academically dishonest behaviours (McCabe & Drinan, 1999).

Peer influence appears to be relatively strong and therefore learning what students think their peers understand about academic dishonesty, how they come to have that understanding, and then how they act as a result is of key importance to understanding students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty. Studies that have sought to discover the role of students' perceptions of their peers' behaviours, outcomes, and beliefs related to academic dishonesty can be said to provide insight into students' understanding of what would be acceptable—or at least would go unpunished— in terms of academic dishonesty in their learning environments. Understanding the role peers have been shown to play in students' understandings is beneficial to the present study since the data source is focus group discussions among peers.

Bases of Students' Judgments about Academic Dishonesty

In this section, I review theories and findings that describe the bases of students' judgments about academic honesty and dishonesty.   Students' judgments refer to the ways in which students understand or think about matters of academic honesty and dishonesty. This section is organized under two main headings: (1) students' development of ethical, epistemological, and reflective judgment; and (2) students' reasoning related to academic dishonesty.

Students' Development of Ethical, Epistemological and Reflective Judgment

Selected theories of student development are reviewed in this section that assist in understanding how students understand their experiences and the issues they face. Student development theory as an area of inquiry has relied heavily on the work of cognitive-structural theorists Perry (1970), Baxter-Magolda (1992), and King and Kitchener (1994), who have focused on understanding the development of college and university students. While these theorists have conceived of their models in terms of sequential stages, this aspect is excluded from the summary provided below since the study described in this dissertation was not designed to allow for any insight into a movement through stages, but focused on a single point in time of expressed meaning.

Perry's (1970) Model of Intellectual and Ethical Development

William Perry was the first cognitive-structural theorist to focus on the intellectual development of college students (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBritto, 1998). Considered a

pioneer in this area, Perry said that "people tend to 'make sense,' that is, to interpret experience meaningfully. The 'meaning' of experience consists of some sort of orderliness found in it, and the nature of this orderliness in a given person's experience can often be deduced by others from the forms of his [sic] behavior [sic], including, especially, what he [sic] himself has to say on the matter" (1970, pp. 41-42). Perry described his study of students at a single college between the years 1954 and 1963 as being about an "evolution in students' interpretation of their lives evident in their accounts" and that this evolution consisted of a "progression of certain forms in which the students construe their experience as they recount it in voluntary interviews…" (1970, p. 1). Perry proposed nine positions that he presented as a trajectory of development in which a person construes knowledge as absolute and typified by polarities like right-wrong and good-bad to one in which a student undertakes to affirm a commitment in a world of contingent knowledge and relative values. The nine positions were grouped into three concepts: dualism, multiplicity, and relativism. Perry described *dualism* to be a tendency to view the world dichotomously where learning is information exchange because knowledge is seen as factual and authorities are seen to have the right answers. A student viewing her world dualistically would say that academic dishonesty is whatever her professor says is prohibited. *Multiplicity* was viewed by Perry as a tendency to honour diverse views when right answers are not yet known. From this perspective all opinions are equally valid and peers are considered legitimate sources of knowledge and the ability to think analytically is improved. A student viewing her world from multiplicity would wonder why, when writing a paper on teaching methodology, she needs to back up her own beliefs based on her own teaching experience, with support from the research since her views should be seen as just as valid as those of anyone else. Perry described *relativism* as a view that recognizes that there is a need to support opinions and that not all opinions are equally valid. Some opinions may be of little value and people can legitimately disagree on some matters. Knowledge is more contextually defined, based on evidence and supporting arguments. A student viewing the world through relativism will understand the needs to develop a rationale that builds on and critiques past research and will see how referencing conventions simplify that reporting of past scholarship.

Baxter-Magolda's (1990) Epistemological Reflection Model

Baxter-Magolda drew extensively from Perry's work aiming to build on his study which had an almost entirely male sample and on the work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and

Tarule (1986) who offered understanding of women's ways of knowing. She set out to learn about any gender-related patterns that might exist in student development and ways of knowing. She said that, like Perry, she believed that "understanding how people make meaning of their experience stems from listening to what they have to say about it" (p. 1) and that "understanding college students' intellectual development is at the heart of effective educational practice" (p. 3). Further to this, Baxter-Magolda asserted that "listening carefully is particularly important in exploring how these students made meaning of their experience because the traditional value placed on objective or rational forms of knowing makes it easier to hear stories consistent with those forms" (pp. 1-2).

The 101 students interviewed in their first year (51 female, 50 male) gradually reduced their number in subsequent years to 70 students participating in a fifth and final interview. Baxter-Magolda interpreted the stories told by these students over time, grouped similar assumptions into categories called ways of knowing, and charted their progression. Baxter-Magolda called the model the "Epistemological Reflection Model." It presents four qualitatively different ways of knowing that she proposed as stages—absolute, transitional, independent, and contextual—each characterized by a core set of epistemic assumptions and each containing patterns.

Absolute knowing means knowledge is viewed as certain; thus instructors are seen as authorities and the purpose of evaluation is to reproduce what the student has learned. Within this stage, some students (generally women) see themselves as receiving the knowledge mostly in silence, and others (generally men) see themselves as mastering the knowledge by speaking and expecting the instructor to facilitate their mastery. Second is *transitional knowing* which involves accepting that some knowledge is uncertain due to a realization that authorities may not be all-knowing. Instructors are not suppliers of knowledge but facilitators of understanding and application. Students take on a utilitarian perspective seeing an investment in learning as determined by perceived future usefulness. Patterns were observed where women tended toward interpersonal learning and saw relationships as central to learning and men tended toward impersonal learning and valued challenge. The next stage is *independent knowing* where knowledge is viewed as mostly uncertain and the instructor provides the context for exploration of knowledge and promotes independent thinking and the exchange of ideas. Evaluation therefore should assess thinking and not penalize divergent views. From within this stage, men

are observed to more often take an individual approach where they focus on their own thinking while women more often take an inter-individual approach where they focus on both their own ideas and those of others. Fourth stage in the model is *contextual knowing* where the legitimacy of knowledge claims is viewed contextually. Perspectives require supporting evidence and the instructor must create conditions that endorse contextual application of knowledge, evaluation of perspectives, and opportunities for mutual critique between students and instructors. At this stage, Baxter-Magolda believed men's and women's patterns converged. Throughout her model she emphasized the similarities between genders and the variability within gender, believing that the patterns she observed were related to but not dictated by gender.

King and Kitchener's (1994) Reflective Judgment Model

These theorists described their model as evolving over many years in which they conducted over 1700 interviews of people from adolescence to old age about their epistemic assumptions and the ways they justified their beliefs in the face of uncertainty. They found that the way people justify their beliefs is related to their assumptions about knowledge. They defined reflective judgments (relying very much on the writings of John Dewey) to be "based on the evaluation and integration of existing data and theory into a solution about the problem at hand, a solution that can be rationally defended as most plausible or reasonable, taking into account the sets of conditions under which the problem is being solved" (p. 8). This theory recognizes problem structure and that ill-structured problems are those that cannot be described with a high degree of completeness or resolved with a high degree of certainty (given the ambiguity of academic dishonesty for students discussed previously in this chapter it would hold that for students some forms of academic dishonesty may be regarded as ill-structured problems).

Seven stages represent distinct sets of assumptions about knowledge and the process of acquiring knowledge which result in different structures for solving ill-structured problems. King and Kitchener clustered the stages in three categories of thinker: pre-reflective, quasi-reflective, and reflective. *Pre-reflective* thinkers regard knowledge as certain (as did those in Perry's dualistic thinkers, Baxter-Magolda's absolute knowers). They do not recognize complex problems and do not use evidence in reaching a conclusion. *Quasi-reflective thinkers* realize that ill-structured problems exist and that knowledge claims about such problems include uncertainty. Though these thinkers use evidence, they have difficulty drawing reasoned conclusions or justifying their beliefs. *Reflective thinkers* maintain that knowledge must be actively constructed

and that claims of knowledge must be viewed in relation to the context in which they were generated. Judgments must be based on relevant data and conclusions should be open to reevaluation.

Comparison of Three Cognitive-structural Theories

Cognitive-structural theories of human development focus on *how* people think, reason, and make meaning rather than on *what* is known or believed (Evans et al., 1998; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 2005).   As demonstrated by the brief description of the three theories presented above, cognitive-structural theories have the capacity to help understand how students view situations they are experiencing and to inform those working in higher education about how to communicate effectively with students and understand students' decision-making (Evans et al., 1998). Table 2.1 presents my own comparison of the various concepts of the cognitive-structural theories reviewed in this section.

Table 2.1

Comparison of the Characterizations of Epistemic Assumptions by Perry (1970), Baxter-Magolda (1990), and King and Kitchener (1994) Apparent in College Student Development

Theorist / Epistemic assumption	Perry (1970)	Baxter-Magolda (1990)	King & Kitchener (1994)
Knowledge is certain	*Dualism*	*Absolute Knower*	*Pre-reflective Thinker*
Knowledge is not yet certain because authorities are unsure		*Transitional Knower*	
Knowledge is uncertain and dependent on the knower	*Multiplicity*		*Quasi- reflective Thinker*
Knowledge is gained through specific processes		*Independent Knower*	
Knowledge is rationally constructed in context	*Relativism*	*Contextual Knower*	*Reflective Thinker*

Students' Reasoning about Academic Dishonesty

Research has indicated that most students know that academic dishonesty is wrong, even if agreement is elusive in terms of which specific behaviours constitute it. And yet, as was noted earlier in the first chapter of this dissertation, researchers have found a high incidence of self-reported academic dishonesty among university students. Knowing that academic dishonesty is wrong may not be sufficient to deter the behaviour. Eisenberg (2004) speculated that results that show that academic dishonesty is widespread can be explained if "moral reasoning and moral behaviour are only loosely related" (p. 165). After a brief review of Rest's Four-Component Model of the determinants of moral behaviour, I review research that has yielded findings that suggest aspects of a structure for students' reasoning related to academic dishonesty.

Theory of Determinants of Moral Behaviour

Much of what is known about the development of moral judgment during the college years can be attributed to the work of James Rest and the numerous studies based on his four-component model of moral behavior. The model is Rest's answer to the question: When a person is behaving morally, what must we suppose has happened psychologically to produce that behavior (Rest, 1986, p. 3)? He asserted that morality is a multifaceted phenomenon and that four psychological components provide a theory for the determinants of moral behaviour (Rest, 1994). Each component is described below, and I have inserted my own examples that demonstrate the component in terms that relate to academic dishonesty.

Component I is about "moral sensitivity" which is the awareness of how one's own actions affect other people. It involves being aware of different possible lines of action and the potential effect of these on other people and as having consequences. In terms of academic dishonesty, such sensitivity would be found in a student who is aware that arranging to copy from a fellow student during an exam could not only lead to negative consequences for him but also for the person who has agreed that he may copy. On a larger scale, the student would understand that his exam cheating upsets the fairness of the assessment, especially as exam scores serve to allow a comparison of performances, for all the students writing the exam. Component II is about "moral judgment." Moral judgment is the ability to determine which of the alternative lines of action that one has recognized is just or right. Demonstrated using concerns for academic dishonesty, such judgment would be exercised when a student who has deferred an exam due to illness refrains from asking other students' who have already written it

what was on the exam because the student recognizes this would lead to an unfair advantage. Component III is concerned with "moral motivation" or the importance given to moral values in competition with other values. For example, a student who greatly wants to gain access to an academically selective program like medicine or law is willing to cheat to achieve a higher grade allowing the value placed on personal advancement to carry more weight than the value of academic honesty. Component IV is about "moral character." A person must have the moral character to withstand the pressures that may come with behaving in a moral way. In the case of academic dishonesty, the student faced with having not started to write a paper due the following day must overcome the temptation to buy a paper from an internet-based paper mill. A deficiency in one's perseverance, strength of conviction, or courage will lead to a moral failure despite having the other three components well in hand. Rest concluded his summary of the model by saying that all four components are determinants of moral action and involve complex interactions between them. They are not meant to necessarily occur in order but together comprise a logical analysis of what it takes to behave morally (Rest, 1994, p. 24).

Rest further noted that it is moral judgment, Component II, that the Defining Issues Test (DIT) addresses. In King and Mayhew's (2002) review of 172 studies that used the DIT with samples of undergraduate students that investigated a wide range of moral issues, they found that longitudinal studies have supported that experience in higher education does promote moral development. Specifically, findings suggest a notable decrease in conventional reasoning and an increase in postconventional reasoning. These are terms coined by Kohlberg (1984) where conventional reasoning is a level of moral development in which the individual is concerned largely with the approval from others and maintenance of social order. Postconventional reasoning is the moral development level in which the individual is concerned with agreed-upon mutual obligations and higher-order principles. King and Mayhew found studies that support that moral reasoning was more advanced in students attending liberal arts colleges. But, they also found that the literature was inconclusive when it came to religiously affiliated college students versus secular college students and was inconclusive about differences among students in different disciplines.

Students' Recognition of Academic Dishonesty as a Moral Problem

Researchers have found that students say they do not engage in academic dishonesty because they believe it is wrong, thought it would make success meaningless, and because they

thought it would compromise their principles (Diekoff, Labeff, Clark, Williams, Francis, & Haines, 1996; Franklyn-Stokes & Newstead, 1995; Graham, Monday, & O'Brien, 1994; and Hendershott, Drinan, & Cross, 1999). In contrast to the moral bases found in these studies, a certain pragmatism was also noted in students' reports. Reasons students did not cheat included believing that success was attainable without being dishonest, failing to even think of cheating, not knowing how to cheat successfully, and respecting the professor too much to engage in dishonesty (Cizek, 1999).

Students recognize academically dishonest acts and acknowledge that academic dishonesty is a problem (Higbee & Thomas, 2002; Yeo, 2007).   In their sample of over 6,000 students, Davis, Grover, Becker, and McGregor (1992) found that over 90% said they thought it was wrong to cheat in an examination and 76% reported that they had done so. While there is limited research on students' recognition of academic dishonesty as a moral problem, others have written about recognizing dishonesty and other moral problems in other contexts. For example, Scott and Jehn (1999), declared that:

> …individuals may differ vastly in their determinations about the intent or harm of a given action. Their views of the intent or harm of a given action may be affected by their own previous actions or previous experiences. They may have differing dispositions that affect their assessments of how much control an actor has in a given situation. They may have different levels of moral development that affect their abilities to analyze situations. These individual differences result in different understandings of whether an action is dishonesty and are extremely important to a complete understanding of the topic of dishonesty in organizations. (pp. 300-301)

Also writing more broadly about moral problem recognition, Bersoff (1999) argued that in cases of less obvious moral concern, self-interest can directly affect how someone construes a particular situation, that is, the process in which general moral values are brought to bear. A problem may not be recognized as a moral one and an immoral act may result from a simple failure to see a chosen action as unethical. It seemed quite possible to Bersoff that "self-interest could lead an individual to underrate or even fail to consider the possible harm an act might cause or the merit of a competing interest" (p. 415).

The prospect that academic dishonesty may not be recognized as a moral problem and therefore not be influenced by moral considerations was raised by Eisenberg (2004).   That is, students may view academic dishonesty as a convenience issue or as being in the realm of social

convention rather than a moral problem in itself. Eisenberg took note of a study by Nevo (1981) and suggested the finding that 60% of students participating in the study did not feel guilty or felt guilty only occasionally when cheating could be explained that students "treated cheating as a violation of a convention but not of a moral rule" (p. 166). He also discussed the findings of a study by Forsyth and Berger (1982) that found only one of four student groups defined academic dishonesty as a moral problem while with the other three groups saw it as violating a social convention rather than universal values. As noted previously in this chapter, students regarding referencing conventions as more of an etiquette or politeness issue than a problem in itself was found by Ashworth et al. (1997) as well. Eisenberg (2004), in his study of Israeli high school students, asked them to respond to vignettes by rating them and providing open ended comments. He found that students who viewed academic dishonesty as a moral issue were more likely to disapprove of others or feel guilty about their own dishonesty than those who saw academic dishonesty as a matter of social convention or group norms. Another finding was that situational variables such as degree of supervision (equating to risk) and importance of the exam (equating to whether dishonesty would be worth the risk) appeared to affect students' view of how right or how wrong an act of academic dishonesty was in that situation.

Students' Invoking of Ethics in Discussion of Academic Dishonesty

Two studies are reviewed in this section that deal with the use of ethical arguments by students in their discussion of academic dishonesty. Granitz and Loewy (2006) found students to most often call on situational ethics in their defense of academic dishonesty and Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne (1997) found an ethic of peer loyalty and an ethic of learning to have a strong place in the student experience of cheating.

Granitz and Loewy (2006) conducted a study in which they reviewed the written record of students formally charged with plagiarizing at a large American university to determine which of six theories of ethical reasoning students' invoked.   The six theories were deontology, utilitarianism, rational self-interest, Machiavellianism, cultural relativism, and situational ethics. The three most utilized were deontology, followed by situational ethics, and Machiavellianism, third. Deontology refers to the theory that duty is the basis of morality. From this ethical position, plagiarism is morally wrong because it constitutes stealing another's work and presenting it as one's own. Students who subscribe to this theory would only plagiarize by mistake or through a lack of awareness that a duty even existed. Situational ethics involve

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variables related to an individual's knowledge and values, social relationships, and organizational situations that could affect an individual's response to an ethical dilemma. The focus is on specific scenarios surrounding an ethical dilemma. Here there is not necessarily a realization of having done something wrong or there is a belief that the specifics of the situation excuse the violation. Machiavellianism involves experiencing no qualms about sacrificing others for one's own benefit. Motivated to act in their own perceived self-interest, plagiarism could be justified if they did not get blamed or caught. If caught, they blame others.

Rather than using predetermined ethical theories to frame students' meanings, Ashworth et al. (1997) found two strong ethics to be apparent in students' understanding: an ethic of peer loyalty and an ethic of learning. Describing the ethic of peer loyalty, Ashworth et al. described students' experience in this regard in this way:

> Potentially questionable practices are evaluated primarily in terms of their effect on the peer group, with a strong consensus that the least acceptable forms of behaviour are those which disadvantage other students. The student ethic is one of fellow-feeling and peer loyalty and it is in this context that cheating is mainly evaluated. The primacy of peer loyalty is also evident in the general reluctance to condemn others who cheat—'all have their reasons', and without knowing the intricacies of each case a uniform response would be inappropriate. (p. 198)

In terms of peer loyalty, not only was there a concern for the effect on other students, the students reported a similar hesitation to cheat their teacher. An ethic of learning was voiced as an objection to practices which circumvent the learning process—this being at least due in part to a concern for squandering an educational opportunity or privilege. Obtaining a mark which is not representative of actual ability was seen as a kind of personal affront to those who have completed the work through honest means. Shortcuts that were labour-saving were suggested to be tactical rather than dishonest, by students in the Ashworth et al. study. While cheating was a moral issue for students in the Ashworth et al. study, students did not always agree with the institutional definitions and policies. This being said, they regarded the rules of the institution as definitive and as being such that students must ultimately abide.

Summary of Research on the Bases of Students' Judgments about Academic Dishonesty

Students tend to recognize that cheating is a problem, making the high incidence of self-reported academic dishonesty perplexing. Some have speculated that this is due to students regarding academic dishonesty as more of a social convention than a moral issue. Others have found students to at least be aware enough of the morality issue at play to try to rationalize their

behaviour using situational ethics, techniques of neutralization, or the invoking of other values like friendship that, in the reasoning of some students, trumps the need to be honest. Pascarella and Terrenzini (2005) reported that there was impressive evidence that moral development occurs during the college years and that it is not merely accounted for as part of the normal maturation process. The findings reviewed in this section point to the need for better understandings of the complexities that exist in students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty—a need the present study aimed to meet.

Summary of the Literature with Respect to the Present Study

This review has been focused on literature that was determined to be germane to students' understanding of academic honesty and dishonesty. As a result, only cursory attention was paid to literature in this field which focused on incidence and correlates of cheating. Appropriate to the purpose of this study, the literature review was focused on research and commentary that provided insight into students' definitions of academic honesty and dishonesty; their explanations for the behaviour; the influences that seem to make a difference in students' behaviours and possibly their understandings; and the moral judgment that underlies those understandings.

From this review, I conclude that the literature shows that students are able to identify basic forms of academic dishonesty and that students agree that academic dishonesty is problematic. When presented with less blatant scenarios of academic dishonesty by researchers, however, students are less able to apply the notion of academic dishonesty and uncertain as to how such infractions would and should be handled in real life. A particular ambiguity surrounds matters of plagiarism and unpermitted collaboration. Related to this ambiguity is a belief that there are degrees of seriousness in acts of academic dishonesty (a belief with which faculty have been found to agree). Research has found that students do rank many kinds of academic dishonesty as being less severe than their professors. Several researchers have concluded that students' reasoning has a moral basis but that they also rely on neutralizing techniques that deflect blame for academic dishonesty. Students' understanding has been shown to be influenced by what they think their peers believe and what they think their peers do when it comes to academic dishonesty. Students will seek to conform to the behaviour of their peers, especially if it seems their cheating is successful. Adherence with peer norms has been an explanation for the apparent positive outcomes of honour codes at many American institutions,

as a campus climate of integrity is created and the social norms of the environment support peer culture and enforcement practices.

This review of selected research affirms Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne's (1997) assertion that it is problematic to assume that the "meaning of cheating is relatively unequivocal, and comparable for the researchers and their subjects (teachers and students) who are all assumed to know what cheating 'looks like' " (p.188). They cautioned that if researchers do not "deal with the question of precisely how cheating is conceived and understood within the student world…that they set aside the possibility that it is a far more involved and complex issue than imagined" (p. 188).

CHAPTER THREE

THE RESEARCH METHOD

Van Manen (1997) described a research method as a way of investigating certain kinds of questions. He suggested that questions are the important starting points but that the "way in which one articulates certain questions has something to do with the research method that one tends to identify with" (p. 2). I accept this point since the research questions I formulated did indeed reflect my predisposition for kinds of questions and ways of answering those questions. Thus, in this chapter, before the typical sections on the research methodology, the data collection, and data analysis, I present the meaning I have ascribed to the metaphor of the student voice and the role of this metaphor in this study.

Metaphor of the Student Voice

While academic honesty and dishonesty was my chosen topic, my fundamental interest both from a theoretical and professional perspective is in the broader notion of accessing the *student voice* in higher education. Carol Gilligan brought the metaphor of voice to common usage in 1982 in her book, *In a Different Voice,* when she used it to compare the psychological development of women and men. In a 1993 printing of that same book she explained what she meant by voice in this way:

> …I say that by voice I mean something like what people mean when they speak of the core of the self. Voice is natural and also cultural. It is composed of breath and sound, words, rhythm, and language. And voice is a powerful psychological instrument and channel, connecting inner and outer worlds. (p. xvi)

While this definition resonated with me, this study was not intended to build psychological theory, as in the case of Gilligan's conceptualization; but, rather, was an attempt to discover students' understandings about a particular phenomenon. More in line with my purpose was a focus on the concept of vulnerability of the student voice in higher education indicated by Batchelor (2006). She declared that "having and expressing a voice are to do with creativity and self-interpretation, the profession of self and the injection of what one is into the outside world" (p. 794). Both the definitions of Gilligan and Batchelor highlight the personal authenticity that is core to the notion of voice and the key role of voice in connecting the inner and outer worlds.

Adapting some of the language of Gilligan and Batchelor, I broadly define the student voice as a metaphor for the meaning conveyed by students about what they experience as

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students. Underlying my definition are my own sensitivities to what I perceive to be a general lack of voice and powerlessness experienced by students in universities.   I intend the metaphor of student voice to serve to not only acknowledge that students have something to say about their experiences, but to draw attention to my belief that we in universities often fail to hear what students are telling us. When I say "hear what students are telling us," I mean not only the various acts of receiving students' comments, but also I mean an active and genuine effort to understand what students are expressing about their experiences.

In myself and others, I have observed that even when we do hear students we can be dismissive, justifying our rejection of the student view point as due to its narrowness or immaturity. At other times, we are selective of what we take from students' stories, valuing some messages more than others. Clandinin and Connelly (1998), writing about research methods but applying aptly to the concern I have raised above about our practices in universities, warned that "we may deceive ourselves and others into thinking we know more about the participants' ongoing lives than is epistemologically warranted by our relationship to the participants" (p. 163). Thus, I advocate for, and adopt in this study, the metaphor of the student voice, in part, as a tool to overcome this taken-for-grantedness that limits our own understandings. Thinking critically about what is taken for granted was a key concern in Greene's (1978) promotion of wide-awakeness in educational practice. She said that rather than perceive our everyday realities as given, we must attend to the conditions of our world and the forces appearing to influence our experiences—a call to action that is consistent with my conceptualization of the student voice.

To discover students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty, I needed to establish the kinds of meanings that would be regarded as expressing the student voice. For me, this meant that I would accept the meanings students' expressed. To operationalize this I regarded the student voice for understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty to be the meanings conveyed by students about what it is like to understand and experience academic honesty and dishonesty in the ways that they do. Students' expressions of their authentic and core experiences of being students who understand and experience academic honesty and dishonesty in a certain way would serve as the data. Their expressions would transform their understandings and experiences from those of an inner world of student experience to an outer world of expression made available to me for the purposes of this study.

Research Methodology

Schwandt (2001) defined methodology as a theory of how inquiry should proceed that involves analysis of assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry. These aspects of the research methodology are presented in this section, beginning with the relative fit of the naturalistic paradigm and the chosen methods. Then, I describe in greater detail the assumptions, principles, and procedures used in this study.

Methodological Fit

Humans and their relations with themselves and their environment are the central concerns of the social sciences (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). Within the social sciences are several research traditions that are each rooted in general world views, or paradigms, that define the appropriate rules and procedures for conducting research (McLean, 1999). The study described in this dissertation is characteristic of the naturalistic paradigm because I, as the researcher, accepted the multiple realities existing in the minds of the study participants; I accepted that the interaction that occurred between me and the study participants would be influential; I accepted the study was specific to the times and places and individuals and therefore would not result in generalizable findings; I accepted that the phenomenon of students' understandings was too complex to determine cause and effect relationships; I accepted that values underlie every aspect of the study from my own choices in the design and conduct of the study to the values of the study participants and the settings in which they derive their experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1999). Specifics related to these matters are explicated later in this chapter.

Because the purpose of the study was to discover senior Education students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty, I needed to access, record, and interpret the meaning students conveyed about what it was like to understand and experience academic honesty and dishonesty in the ways that they did. The main tasks I saw for myself in this study were to create conditions for students to tell their interpretations of their experiences—that is, to bring forth the student voice related to understanding academic honesty and dishonesty in the ways that they do; to record those expressions, perspectives, and stories; and then to interpret and represent students' meaning in educationally meaningful ways.

In order to directly represent students' understandings and give accounts that were educationally meaningful, I used selected personal experience methods identified by Clandinin

and Connelly (1998), selected phenomenological methods described by Creswell (1998), and selected grounded theory methods described by Strauss and Corbin (1994). These methods were used to address the three research questions which were: (1) what is the substantive content of senior undergraduate Education students' expressed understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty; (2) how do senior undergraduate Education students structure their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty; and (3) what do senior undergraduate Education students anticipate their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty mean for them as future teachers?

Personal experience methods, according to Clandinin and Connelly (1998), treat people and experience, rather than organizational structures and systems, as the starting points for social science inquiry. Experience *is* the stories people live. The researcher defines the starting and stopping points in a study of experience and inevitably redefines the purpose as new and unexpected events as stories are revealed. Methods used make the focus of the inquiry the participant rather than focusing on aspects such as organizational systems and structures. Clandinin and Connelly characterize methods for the study of personal experience as focused in four directions simultaneously: inward and outward, backward and forward. Inward are the internal conditions such as ranges of feelings and outward are the existential conditions such as the features of the environment. Backward and forward refer to the temporal conditions of past, present and future. To study experience in this way requires a high degree of openness and ability "to follow leads in many directions and to hold them all in inquiry context as the work proceeds" (p. 159).

Phenomenological and grounded theory methods were well-suited to facilitate the openness required for a study of this type. Creswell (1998) described phenomenology as a qualitative tradition of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences concerning a phenomenon as described by participants in a study. He further defined a phenomenological study as one in which the meaning of lived experience is described for several individuals about a phenomenon. Because, in this study, I needed to ground my interpretations of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty in the data themselves, an inductive approach to data analysis consistent with grounded theory as described by Strauss and Corbin (1992) was deemed appropriate. Immersion in the meaning of students

was necessary to derive categories from the data themselves and not from pre-set categories or theoretical frameworks.

In summary, this study of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty is best described in methodological terms as one conducted in the naturalistic paradigm wherein the methods associated with personal experience, phenomenology, and grounded theory were employed.

Philosophical Assumptions

Available were a number of lenses through which the experience of people in organizations could be seen and explained, each with its own possibilities and basic assumptions about the nature of reality, what qualifies as valid knowledge, how to access that knowledge, and the appropriate goals of knowledge (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Philosophical assumptions operate at a broad abstract level in guiding the design of all qualitative studies (Creswell, 1998). Creswell identified five such assumptions and said that they represent a conscious choice on the part of researchers. They are ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical, and methodological assumptions. These assumptions form the bases for how I understood knowledge in the context of this study (and in other social science contexts) thus it is necessary to discuss how each was manifested in this study and how their implications for practice in this research process was anticipated.

Ontological Assumptions

These are assumptions about the nature of reality and generally are described as either accepting that there is a single reality that can be discovered (*realism*: the world exists beyond us) or accepting that there are multiple realities that are in need of being voiced (*idealism:* the world exists in our minds). My ontological assumption accepts idealism—the existence of multiple realities. Merleau-Ponty (2002) presented the same ontological assumption this way: "We must not, therefore, wonder whether we really perceive a world, we must instead say: the world is what we perceive" (p. xviii).

Realities in this study included those of all involved in the research situation. There was the reality I experienced, the realities of the participants, and those of the reader or audience interpreting the study. This required that I report multiple statements presenting the diverse perspectives on the phenomenon being explored (Moustakas, 1994).

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Epistemological Assumptions

Creswell (1998) defined epistemological assumptions as being about the relationship of the researcher to that being researched—a belief about how we as subjects acquire knowledge about the world. Van Manen (1997) stated his view that "to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings" (p. 5) and said that since to know the world we must be in the world, the act of researching is "the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it" (p. 5). As researcher, I saw myself as an instrument of interpretation and a co-constructor of knowledge. The assumption in this study was that I needed to lessen the distance between myself and the participants, and between our experiences of the phenomenon of understanding academic honesty and dishonesty. Thus, I spent time in a setting with the participants with the intent of becoming viewed more as an insider to their understandings than an outsider. Meeting with students on their own campuses in the context of a focus group was expected to facilitate my inclusion in their understandings within the delimitations I had placed on this study regarding timelines and appropriate amounts of data.

Axiological Assumptions

Assumptions about the role of values in a study are said to be axiological. I assumed that this study and students' descriptions of their experiences and understandings would be value-laden. I assumed that universities as institutions of higher learning value academic honesty and value fairness. Likewise, I expected that honesty and fairness would also be values of importance to students, even if what I was to learn about was how and why these values are compromised in the form of academic dishonesty.

Rhetorical Assumptions

Rhetorical assumptions are represented by the literary form in use. I have made extensive use of the words, descriptions, stories and discussions provided by the study participants. My writing has included use of the first-person pronoun and language that is sometimes more personal than formal. These rhetorical choices indicate an orientation to the discovery of meanings and understandings rather than toward hypothesis testing and generalizability.

Methodological Assumptions

The conceptualization of the entire research process indicated a methodological assumption and emerged from the previous four assumptions. An inductive logic was used in the study which meant an emergent design was employed to some degree that responded to the ongoing construction of knowledge. Emergent features of the design are described later in this chapter.

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Relevant Principles and Procedures

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The place of theory in this study is described in this section along with the phenomenological principle of bracketing.

Place of Theory

In advance, I decided that I would examine students' understandings as expressed meaning; thus I entered the study with an orienting framework that informed what would be studied and how it would be studied. Rather than theory, experience of students was the starting point. I was attempting to gain insightful descriptions of the ways that students' experienced their world even though such an orientation did not offer the possibility of effective theory *a priori* that could explain or control the world but instead offered the possibility of plausible insights (Van Manen, 1997). That is, I was attempting to build "links between experiential inquiry and life experience more generally" (Clandidin & Connelly, 1998, p. 152) that would bring me, as researcher, into a more direct contact with the worlds of students.

Not only was theory unavailable in advance for this study, freedom from pre-existing theory allowed me to more easily imagine what it was like to understand academic honesty and dishonesty in the ways that students appeared to do. As Greene (1995) put it, even though the world of another can seem totally alien, "we are called upon to use our imaginations to enter into that world, to discover how it looks and feels from the vantage point of the person whose world it is" (p. 4). To take the vantage point of another, I had to extend my own experience—an extension that did not necessarily require me to approve of or agree with that other vantage point but rather meant that I could "grasp it as a human possibility" (Greene, 1995, p. 4).

Bracketing

Bracketing (also called *epoche*) arose as part of Edmund Husserl's work in which he advocated the suspension of presuppositions. As Ashworth (1999) noted, those conversant with the work of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Nietzche, will doubt that our grounding in presuppositions

can be escaped since as Heidegger says: "Every inquiry is a seeking. Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought" (cited in Ashworth, 1999, p. 707). Ashworth favoured the existentialist interpretation provided by Merleau-Ponty who described bracketing not as a turning away from the world or detached consciousness but as a resolve to set aside theories, research presuppositions, ready-made interpretations in order to reveal engaged, lived experience. I appreciated this interpretation of bracketing and resolved to follow this approach but did not regard it as something that could be fully achieved. The point that Ashworth asked be born in mind is that the "procedure has the purpose of allowing the life-world of the participant in the research to emerge in clarity, so as to allow study of some specific phenomenon within that life-world to be carried out" and he clarified that what "is to be bracketed must be seen in terms of facilitating entry to the life-world, not as a requirement that nothing be presupposed" (p. 708). Greene expressed this sentiment as the requirement for imagination: "It takes imagination to break with ordinary classifications and come in touch with actual young people in their variously lived situations" (1995, p. 14).

Consistent with the above views, in this study I enacted bracketing as a resolve to set aside theories, research presuppositions, and ready-made interpretations in order to reveal engaged, lived experience. Van Manen (1997) said that often we know too much about the phenomenon we wish to investigate rather than too little:

> Our 'common sense' pre-understandings, our suppositions, assumptions, and the existing bodies of scientific knowledge, predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question. (p. 46)

The predisposition that van Manen described is regarded by some other qualitative researchers, such as Strauss and Corbin (1994), to be an asset rather than a problem. Strauss and Corbin treat the personal quality of the researcher as an indication of an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data and call this *theoretical sensitivity*. These authors described this notion as follows:

> Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't. All this is done in conceptual rather than concrete terms. It is theoretical sensitivity that allows one to develop a theory that is grounded, conceptually dense, and well integrated—and to do this more quickly than if this sensitivity were lacking. (p. 42)

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The principle of bracketing and theoretical sensitivity appear contradictory in nature—the first problematizes the knowledge and perspectives researchers bring to the research process and the other celebrates the potential contribution and insight that it offers. To add further complication, Van Manen, like other social science researchers asked how we can possibly suspend our beliefs in the research process. He acknowledged this difficulty in this way:

> If we simply try to forget or ignore what we already "know" we may find that the presuppositions persistently creep back into our reflections. It is better to make explicit our understanding, beliefs, biases, assumptions and presuppositions, and theories. We try to come to terms with our assumptions, not in order to forget them again, but rather to hold them deliberately at bay and even to turn this knowledge against itself, as it were, thereby exposing its shallow or concealing character. (p. 46)

To activate the benefits of bracketing and theoretical sensitivity, I explained my perspective as researcher and my assumptions at the outset in the first chapter of this dissertation and in the current chapter.

Data Collection Methods

Methods are the set of procedures and techniques for gathering and analyzing data. Under the headings of population, site selection, participants, and use of focus groups, the specific procedures are described for gathering the data used to answer the research questions in this study. Means for addressing ethical concerns are addressed throughout this section.

Population

The population of interest in this study was undergraduate Education students nearing completion of their Bachelor of Education degrees. These students were of interest not only because they were individuals who might be expected to be thoughtful about the purpose of education but also because, as teacher candidates, they would have a significant role in shaping the views of academic honesty and dishonesty held by future students. Also, most Education programs require pre-course work and therefore Education students, while having a common experience, come from a variety of other programs and have that previous experience upon which to reflect. Even though the findings of this study are not generalizable, a study of future educators and their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty was believed to bring particular insights and implications of interest in the field of educational administration.

Further justification to study a sub group among university students is found in the assertion of Kuh and Whitt (1998) who said: "Large public, multipurpose universities are

comprised of many different groups whose members may or may not share or abide by all of the institution's norms, values, practices beliefs and, meanings" (p. 11). They suggested that it is more realistic to view institutions as multicultural contexts that are host to numerous subgroups with different priorities, traditions and values. Thus, to focus the study and to reduce the variables in an already multi-faceted phenomenon, the population of senior undergraduate Education students was selected.

Site selection

The sites chosen to recruit participants from the population of interest were two western Canadian universities: the University of Alberta and the University of Saskatchewan. These universities were chosen because of the convenient location and because of their common characteristics which included recent history of attention to issues of academic integrity, status as medical-doctoral and research intensive universities, and their mid-sized to large enrolments in Canadian terms. Both had engaged in educational campaigns and offered "academic integrity weeks" on their campuses along with other resources and promotional activities aimed at increasing awareness of how to avoid academic dishonesty and awareness of the penalties for engaging in academic dishonesty.

Ethics approval was required at both universities. The University of Saskatchewan approved the application in March 2005 (see Appendix A for application) and the University of Alberta, after reviewing the University of Saskatchewan documentation, approved the conduct of focus groups on their campus in April 2005.

Participants

To recruit participants, the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan and the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta were contacted and permission was requested to proceed with the research by inviting volunteers from classes taught in their departments (see Appendix B). Both department heads agreed and were supportive, facilitating my contact with professors so that I could recruit students from their departments' classes.

I made brief presentations in post-internship educational administration classes (EDADM 425 at the University of Saskatchewan in the winter term of 2005 and EDPS 410 at the University of Alberta in the spring term of 2005 and the winter term of 2007) in which I provided students with written information that included the consent statement that they would

sign to fully participate (see Appendix C) and invited them to participate in the study as members of focus groups. I made announcements in six classes at the University of Saskatchewan in March 2005, six classes at the University of Alberta in May 2005, and eight classes at the University of Alberta in February 2007.

In my announcements, I explained my interest in the student voice and my belief that institutions need to go straight to students to learn what it is they think and experience. I next described the nature of the conversation they could expect if they chose to participate in the study. I outlined the kinds of questions I would ask and emphasized that I would not ask the students about their own history with academic dishonesty or specific incidents of any wrongdoing. I explained that I believed there were three benefits to their participation—first, the chance to participate in a qualitative research study; second, the opportunity to incorporate their own reflections and understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty into their own professional practice as teachers; and third, the benefit of pizza and pop to be provided at the session itself. I also described my responsibility to follow an ethical protocol that included protecting the confidentiality of the participants. Then, I presented some proposed times for sessions and circulated a sign-up sheet where students could either indicate a scheduled time that worked for them, or provide their name and e-mail address if they were interested in participating but unavailable at the proposed times. For this latter group of students, I e-mailed them to set a mutually agreeable time.

While I had anticipated that getting volunteers would be difficult, it was more difficult than originally expected. In my visits to the University of Saskatchewan classes in March 2005, I estimate I announced the opportunity to volunteer in my research to approximately 150 students. At the University of Alberta in May 2005, I estimate my invitation reached 100 students and in February 2007, 250 students. Generally, in a class of 40 students I would have two or three students sign their names as willing to participate. At my February 2007 visits to the University of Alberta, I had a no-show rate to the sessions of about 40%. While I did not keep track at the University of Saskatchewan, I believe the no-show rate was lower—perhaps 25%.

Six focus group discussions were conducted along with three individual interviews when only one student arrived at a planned group session. A total of ten students participated from the University of Saskatchewan and 15 (7 in 2005, 8 in 2007) participated at the University of

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Alberta. The University of Saskatchewan data were collected in March 2005. The University of Alberta data was collected over two visits, one in May 2005 and the other in February 2007. In Alberta in May 2005, one focus group was held and two individual interviews where only one student attended at the designated time. Unfortunately, as I shifted my focus in the spring of 2005 to work and family responsibilities, I did not complete the data transcription nor did I try to contact those participants again until January 2006. At that time I found my contact information was only valid for two participants out of seven and thus I decided to exclude the data collected in May 2005 at the University of Alberta from the study. Table 3.1 shows the timing, number of groups, and number of participants involved in the data collected for this study.

Table 3.1

Timing and Number of Participants for Data Collection at the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Alberta

Data Collection	University of Saskatchewan students	University of Alberta students	University of Saskatchewan Policy Administrator	University of Alberta Policy Administrator
March 2005	3 groups *n = 6+2+2 = 10*		1	
May 2005		1 group*, 2 interviews* *n =6+1+1 = 8*		1
February 2007		2 groups, 1 interview *n = 3+4+1 = 8*		
Total n = 28	10	16	1	1

* May 2005 University of Alberta student data had to be excluded when the majority of students' contact information expired and I could not gather the transcript releases required by the approved protocol.

Student characteristics were not recorded. Retrospectively, to describe the students in the broadest of terms and based solely on my visual observations of those who submitted transcript

release forms and are therefore included in the study, seven of the 17 students participating in focus groups were men, most students were in their early to mid 20s with five appearing to be in their 30s, and three of the students appeared to me to be members of a visible minority group (two possibly of Aboriginal background and one possibly of Asian background). None of the students offered that they were studying on student visas and none of the students offered that they had a disability of any kind. All of the students spoke English very fluently, seeming to speak it as their first language. Overall, although the representativeness of the sample was not a consideration in the design of the study, the students who participated seemed fairly typical of Education students observed in both learning environments.

Use of Focus Groups

Data were collected by recording the discussion of focus groups of senior undergraduate Education students from the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Alberta. The focus groups varied in size from two students to six students and a total of six student groups but, as noted above, the data of this study are formed by the transcripts of five of those six focus group discussions. In this section I describe why the focus group was the appropriate data collection technique given the purpose of this study, I describe how I prepared for and conducted the focus groups, and I describe how informed consent and confidentiality were achieved.

Rationale for Focus Groups

Morgan (1997) defined focus groups as a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. It is the researcher's interest that provides the focus, whereas the data themselves come from the group interaction. Focus groups were selected because I anticipated that they would allow me to produce concentrated amounts of data on precisely the topic of interest and allow me to collect that data from a number of participants at the same time. Beyond this benefit of an efficiency gained through a group format was the richness of meaning that a group interview/conversation could yield compared with researcher-student interviews conducted one-on-one. While the questions I posed—including my word choice, framing, and delivery—were expected to shape students' accounts, so too was the forum in which they would be asked for their views. In the group setting, students had to listen to each other and react to each other's comments and questions and reactions, not only to mine as the researcher. This meant that I needed to relinquish some control of the discussion as it is natural for individuals to channel the conversation to areas of more meaning or

personal interest, and likewise channel it away from other less engaging or, perhaps, less comfortable aspects of the topic of academic honesty and dishonesty. Noting the directions students would take the discussion became part of the data itself, adding to the richness and depth.

However, focus groups are not naturalistic and, as facilitator, I expected to have an effect on the group's interactions regardless of my effort to minimize my role and still provide effective facilitation. This problem is not unique to focus groups, and in fact is perhaps less apparent in focus groups than in the individual interview, according to Morgan (1997). He argued that focus groups balance the advantages and disadvantages of participant observation and individual interviews and suggested that the simplest test of whether focus groups are appropriate for a research project is to ask how actively and easily the participants would discuss the topic of interest and, as hoped, the participants participating in a pilot focus group were able to discuss this subject freely.

As noted already, the data for this study was the result of five focus group discussions in which an overall total of 17 students participated. This is a relatively small number of discussions among a relatively small number of students compared to other research using focus groups (for example, Devlin & Grey, 2007, conducted eight focus group interviews with a total of 56 student participants for their study of the reasons students plagiarize). Nonetheless, it was clear to me in the early stages of analysis that additional groups were not necessary when the richness and the mix of unique meanings and commonly held perspectives conveyed by students made it apparent the data set would provide answers to the research questions and fulfil the research purpose. The detailed insight I was seeking in this study was in line with Greene's (1995) metaphor of viewing people as either big or as small in educational practice.

> To see things or people small, one chooses to see from a detached point of view, to watch behaviours from the perspective of a system, to be concerned with trends and tendencies rather than the intentionality and concreteness of everyday life. To see things or people big, one must resist viewing other human beings as mere objects or chess pieces and view them in their integrity and particularity instead. One must see from the point of view of the participant in the midst of what is happening if one is to be privy to the plans people make, the initiatives they take, the uncertainties they face.

I wanted to see the students as *big* rather than *small* because I needed to discover their understandings by gaining first hand insight into the nuance of their perspectives. Taking a close-up view of students so as to access the level of insight I sought meant that, practically, fewer students in fewer discussions could be studied.

Preparation for Focus Group Facilitation

To prepare for the focus group discussion, I conducted a pilot focus group, interviewed policy administrators on both campuses, and reviewed the relevant documents from the University of Alberta and the University of Saskatchewan in advance of conducting the focus groups for the study. These preparations are described below.

Pilot group. As was suggested in the literature on interview and focus group techniques, a pilot focus group was conducted with students from the University of Saskatchewan, to refine the focus group protocol and to discover the tone that could be taken among students discussing the phenomenon. That focus group discussion was not recorded and does not account for any of the data in this study. The participating undergraduate students were acquaintances of mine from across campus who were asked to informally respond to the kinds of questions I was planning to ask in the study. Only minor adjustments were made to the protocol with the greatest benefit of the pilot being having the opportunity to see how the timing would play out. Later, preliminary analysis of the University of Saskatchewan data collection in March 2005 confirmed that the method was yielding meaningful data and that no modifications to the data collection approach to be used at the University of Alberta was necessary.

Interviews. An interview protocol was developed for university personnel (see Appendix D) with some key administrative responsibility for the institutional policy on academic honesty and dishonesty (see Appendix E for information and participant consent form). The University of Saskatchewan interview was conducted two weeks ahead of the first focus group session and the University of Alberta interview was conducted one day ahead of the first focus group session. While originally I intended to make additional use of the data gained from these interviews, they were in the end used to ensure I had a reasonable understanding of the policy context on each campus and to prepare me as a facilitator. These data are not reported on in this study.

Document review. I reviewed the policy documents and educational materials available on the university web pages. At the time of the interviews with the policy administrators, I asked

them to view what I had collected and to suggest any additional material. Knowledge gained from these documents provided me with a better understanding of aspects of students' learning environments that allowed me to facilitate more meaningful discussions.

Format of Focus Groups

The meeting rooms or small classrooms in which the focus groups were conducted allowed participants to sit around a common table and face one another with a tape recorder placed in the middle of the table. Participants were invited to partake in the pizza and pop right at the outset of the meeting. Students briefly introduced themselves to one another and, in some instances, were already known to each other.

I began each session with what I called a warm up activity. This was identified as one way to generate comfort and discussion quickly (Morgan, 1997; Ashworth et al., 1997). The activity involved me handing out scenarios on single pages and then placing on the table one page with the words "Academic Honesty" in large print, and one page reading "Academic Dishonesty." The scenarios presented were as follows:

- Making a few small changes to a paper you wrote for a class last year and submitting it for another class
- Asking a friend to proof-read an essay and suggest ways to improve it
- Collaborating with a friend on a home work assignment that you each hand in separately
- Asking a friend who took the class last year what the midterm was like
- Noticing a classmate cheating with crib notes during an exam and not reporting her to your professor
- Not doing your fair share of a group assignment
- Letting a friend copy your assignment because he forgot it was due today
- Failing to reference another person's ideas appropriately in a paper
- Keeping a book on 2 hour reserve for your class for 2 days, on purpose
- Fabricating data for an assignment that required you to interview a teacher

I developed the scenarios to align with definitions in the policies of the universities and from the research literature that highlighted the areas commonly viewed as ambiguous when it comes to judging an act to be honest or dishonest (e.g., Higbee and Thomas, 2002; Christensen-Hughes & McCabe, 2006; Yeo 2007). Every scenario received discussion at each session and

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each student had two or more scenarios and as many as four, depending on the size of the group. Students were asked to place the scenario on a continuum that was formed by the two pieces of paper serving as end points, one with the words "academic honesty" and the other with "academic dishonesty." Students were asked to offer some brief explanation as to the reason for their choice of placement. While the activity generated some interesting discussion, the purpose was to "break the ice" and get students talking about definitions and it was successful in doing so. I did not record the placement of the scenarios, but the views expressed in these early stages of the focus groups proved to be rich in presenting the defining ideas of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty.

Following the scenario exercise, the discussion then moved to my asking of questions. The questions were asked in a natural way that acknowledged previous relevant comments, or I asked for students to expand on their comments if they related to a later question or topic. Generally, I would look to each student in succession for a comment on the question at hand and also would encourage a more natural conversation. The following questions served as a guide to the discussion (also included as Appendix F):

- What does academic honesty mean to you?
- What does academic dishonesty mean to you?
- What are the usual ways that students go about completing their academic work?
- What would you consider to be unusual or unexpected ways for students to complete their academic work?
- How have you come to have this view?
- Do you expect your peers share this view? Why?
- Do you expect your professors share this view? Why?
- How do you think university policies on academic dishonesty would apply to what we have been talking about?
- How would you describe the overall atmosphere for academic honesty here?
- Should universities care about whether students are academically honest or dishonest? Why or why not?
- How do you think any of your understandings or experience with academic honesty and dishonesty applies to your future as a teacher?

The session was concluded with my final question as to whether there was anything else anyone wanted to say about our discussion or an aspect that they thought I would ask about that I had not. This provided the closing discussion at which point I then thanked everyone and turned off the tape recorder.

Approach to Focus Group Facilitation

I aimed to provide as warm and comfortable a welcome to the discussion group as possible. Introducing myself to each participant as they entered and engaging in small talk about their academic workloads or about their job search. The pizza was available right at the beginning of the session, so I would invite them to help themselves to the food and drinks that were provided. I provided each person with two copies of the consent form, one that I had them fill out and provide to me and the other that they kept for their own records.

In the warm-up activity I did not offer any comment about where students placed the scenarios. If they asked me to comment, I would defer to the others, asking "what do others think?" Since a completely neutral response is not normal in social interactions, I did not try to be non-communicative, but instead just nodded to acknowledge the comment or point of view. At other times in some discussions, a student would direct a question to me like, "students get expelled for that right?" and I would respond with "it really depends on a lot of things." I was aware that I was curbing my inclination to correct or explain when students voiced a misunderstanding or acknowledged a lack of information about something we were discussing.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed of all aspects of this study, including its risks, and they participated voluntarily. Participants were not deceived in any way in the course of this study. Included in the recruitment information potential participants received a consent form (see consent section of Appendix C). The consent form adhered to the University of Saskatchewan consent form guidelines and described the research purpose and procedures, potential risks, attention to confidentiality, the right to withdraw and the opportunity to ask questions. Included in the consent form was a confidentiality clause that pointed to the limits with which I could guarantee the discussion would be kept confidential. The clause asked that participants respect the confidentiality of the other members of the group by not disclosing the contents of the discussion outside the group and that they be aware that others may not respect their confidentiality.

Participants were advised that because of this limited guarantee of confidentiality, they could refrain from descriptions of particular incidents of wrongdoing that related to the topic. Since in some cases, even if participants attempted to disguise a story in some way they could still be recognizable to students inhabiting the same learning environments, participants were advised that if they wanted to describe an incident or point of view to me that they did not think was appropriate for the focus group, they could arrange for an individual interview. In the case of follow up interviews, students would have been asked to review written information that included a second consent form similar to that of required for focus group participation (see Appendix G) and the topic of the interview would have been of the students' choice so no interview protocol would be required. No students asked to have the follow up interview.

Anonymity of respondents was compromised in this study since the students participating in focus groups were enrolled in the same program and in some cases were known to each other. In addition, the students introduced themselves to each other using their first names. However, in all transcriptions and reporting of data, names were eliminated and names of participants in the study were not and will not be disclosed.

Participants were given the opportunity to review the final transcript. Difficulties contacting some of the students have been previously noted in this chapter. Participants received a copy with their own statements highlighted. Participants had the right to withdraw any or all of their responses. Participants were asked to sign a transcript release form (see Appendix H and I). When it was discovered that either the contact information was no longer valid for the University of Alberta students or they had chosen not to respond to my request for a signed transcript release form, because transcript release had been outlined in the ethics proposal and in the information provided to the participants at the time of their volunteering, it was important that the commitment be kept so those data were excluded.

Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis occurred at many stages and in several ways in this study. I present the methods used beginning by describing the timing of analysis, openness to the student voice, theme development process, trustworthiness and authenticity, and presentation of analysis.

Phases of Data Analysis

The data analysis occurred in phases summarized, largely in a chronological order, in Table 3.2 where phases one to six focused on bringing forward students' voices and the final two phases shifted to my integration of their understandings into a conceptualization of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty.

Table 3.2

Phases of data analysis

Phase	Analytical activities	Timing
1	Instantaneous analyzing via my own presence at the focus group discussions that form the data set for this study (and via my personal transcribing of the discussions)	March 2005 (April 2005) May 2005 (January 2006), February 2007 (April 2007)
2	Developing presentations on preliminary themes from the study for two conferences (STLHE, CACUSS)	June 2006
3	Reviewing of transcripts following the phenomenological principles of bracketing, grouping of meaning, inductive reasoning, and thematic analysis	March - June 2007
4	Working with tentative themes to code transcripts, grouping excerpts in documents with tentative interpretive text to connect the ideas	June-July 2007
5	Shifting, combining, and separating out ideas to develop the logic of the dissertation and the arguments to support my presentation of meaning in a manner that was true to student voices.	July 2007
6	Integrating my own insight in order to develop a conceptualization that could serve to enhance the representation of the data, reviewing the data deductively for fit into proposed conceptualization.	July 2007 – August 2008
7	Returning to the research literature reviewed for the proposal and exploring additional areas of research and thought that could assist in the description and explanation of students' understandings, analyzing how and if they could be applied with integrity to the data in the study,	December 2007; August 2008; November 2009
8	Choosing the most compelling lines of thought to develop as conclusions and implications for the dissertation.	September 2009 – March 2010

As is apparent in the preceding table, analysis occurred over several months and years and many aspects were revisited over time. While efficiencies were certainly lost given the lengthy timeframe, benefits of this timing are discussed in the final chapter.

Openness to the Student Voice

Since I believed that I could *pursue* the setting aside of certain presuppositions that may have impaired my ability to be open to the lived experience of students, but was not convinced that such a setting aside could be fully achieved, I regarded my commitment to bracketing certain presuppositions as something I was striving toward.

I was striving to bracket presuppositions based on theories or earlier findings. The academic dishonesty literature is largely positivistic in nature and has relied on quantitative measures of attitudes, self-reported behaviours, and correlations between these behaviours and student and institutional characteristics. Such work has typically relied on survey instruments and is not set in the contexts of the students. While these foci and methods differed from those employed in this study, they could nonetheless influence my interpretation of the data. For this reason, Ashworth (1999) suggested literature be reviewed after data collection is complete and interpretation has begun. For the proposal that was required in order to gain approval to conduct the present study, a review of the literature was conducted since it was the literature in the area of academic dishonesty that had spurred my interest in the phenomenon of students' understanding of academic honesty and dishonesty in the first place. Consistent with Ashworth's (1999) recommendation, a more in depth review of a smaller body of research relevant to the student meanings was reviewed in Chapter Two following preliminary data analysis.

I was striving to avoid my tendency to want to correct misunderstandings or warn against acts likely to be regarded as cheating among students who were participating in the study. My task was to attempt to be open to the meanings of the lived experiences of the students rather than think about how what they were saying fit with existing theories or aligned with other findings or suggested particular solutions.

I was striving to set aside the tendency to construct hypotheses. I attempted to avoid drawing on pre-existing models as such models have an ambiguous relationship to experience (Ashworth, 1999). In spite of students' comments that were reminiscent of theory or called for a connection to be made, I bracketed in favour of the life-world of the students in my study and

have written the analysis chapters as close to the student voice as possible using many direct quotes from students.

I was striving to set aside my personal knowledge and beliefs so that I was prepared to hear expressions that were very differently inclined from my own. My positive or negative judgments of what students described as their experience did not impair my ability to be open to their reality.

I was striving to set aside questions of cause and assumptions that dictated method. My task was to evoke the life-world of the students in my study, not to construct causal accounts. I was interested in conditions within students' experience rather than causes of their experiences.

Theme Development Process

A theme was defined as an element which occurred frequently in the text and was considered to be a means for getting at an aspect of students' understanding of academic honesty and dishonesty. While bracketing helped me to deal with my analytical blinders composed of assumptions, experience, and immersion in the literature, Strauss and Corbin (1994) pointed out that assumptions, experience, and knowledge are not necessarily problematic: "It's just that we have to challenge our assumptions, delve beneath our experience, and look beyond the literature if we are to uncover phenomena…" (p.76). To develop themes, the ability to see with analytic depth was required. Strauss and Corbin provided a set of techniques for enhancing theoretical sensitivity that provide an interesting parallel to what bracketing was intended to achieve in this study. These parallels (which include steering thinking out of the confines of both research literature and personal experiences and helping to avoid standard ways of thinking about phenomena) led me to regard the process of bracketing as an investment in theoretical sensitivity rather than as antithetical to it.

Van Manen (1997) said that a theme is the experience of focus, of meaning, of point. When I reflected on the expressions of the students in this study, I asked myself: what are the meanings, the points? Thus, a theme was at best a simplification of the lived experience of the students and was understood as intransitive and as capturing an aspect of the definition or structure of lived experience. My task was to see how the meanings students provided opened up and deepened a more reflective understanding of the notions of academic honesty and dishonesty. Themes came, in part, from my desire to make sense. As researcher, I had the need to understand what is significant in the students' understandings of academic honesty and

dishonesty. The themes were the sense I was able to make of the phenomenon. I put into words what something meant to me and produced theme-like statements. The themes indicate my openness to particular notions embedded in students' lived experiences.

When I examined and re-examined and connected and re-connected the words, phrases, stories, metaphors, rants, debates, and lines of discussions that students presented to me and each other in this study, I was able to describe their meaning as captured in several overarching ideas. The next question was how did the theme relate to students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty? Emergent was a distinction between notions that that had a defining quality and notions that were more distant and better described as structural or anticipatory in content. These, described in detail in Chapters Four, Five and Six, were: rules, intent, and unearned grade advantages defining academic dishonesty for students; enticements, deterrents, and likelihoods of detection structuring students' understandings; and students' expectations for teaching and professionalism. Concepts and meanings could have been, and were in the course of analysis, grouped in different ways. Finally, I settled on the themes that I believed were the best means to get at the notions students were voicing and provided the best groupings of ideas and meanings. In doing so, I inherently reduced the student voice to these thematic units so as to be able to discuss and reflect on what they could mean to the field of educational administration.

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggested that when considering the positivistic notion of "validity" of findings in the naturalistic paradigm that the notion is instead appropriately described as being about trustworthiness and authenticity. Interpreting the direction of Lincoln and Guba (2000) and their reference to Schwandt (1996) in this regard, to ensure trustworthiness, I determined the degree to which I could answer these questions in the affirmative to serve as criteria for the trustworthiness of the findings:

1. Does the knowledge generated reflect students' lived experience?
2. Does the knowledge generated appear to extend the knowledge found in the day to day practice of students, teachers, professors, and educational administrators?
3. Does the knowledge enhance or cultivate the ability of students, teachers, professors, and educational administrators to engage in critical critique of the phenomenon?
4. Does the knowledge sufficiently match the realities that the implications can be appropriately acted upon?

While I do not guarantee that in this study I have arrived at the single correct match between the data and the findings and conclusions, efforts have been made to ensure the trustworthiness. I was guided in these efforts by van Manen who called for a broadening of the notion of rationality:

> Rationality expresses a faith that we can share this world, that we can make things understandable to each other, that experience can be made intelligible. But a human science perspective also assumes that lived human experience is always more complex than the result of any singular description, and that there is always an element of the ineffable to life. (1997, p. 16)

In accordance with van Manen's view, in this study I sought "precision and exactness by aiming for interpretive descriptions that exact[ed] fullness and completeness of details, and that explor[ed] to a degree of perfection the fundamental nature of the notion being addressed in the text" (p. 17).

Throughout the analysis, I attended to the criteria for judging the processes and outcomes of naturalistic inquiries presented by Guba and Lincoln (1989, pp. 245-251). The concepts of authenticity most appropriate to this study were fairness, ontological authenticity, and educative authenticity. *Fairness* addresses the quality of balance of all stakeholders' views, perspectives, claims, concerns, and voices that should be made apparent in the text. The goal is to prevent marginalization rather than achieve objectivity. Throughout the process, I asked myself: Have I been inclusive in my analysis and reporting? As the analysis chapters were reaching their final version, I tracked every quote used or referred to back to the transcripts to see which student comments had not appeared in the dissertation and if there was any trend or lost meaning contained in the unused excerpts. My conclusion was that what remained either offered no additional nuance was gained or that comments spoke to an interpretation presented in the final chapter about students' sense of their role in the university. Additionally, an auditor was engaged by my graduate supervisor to review the recordings, transcripts and dissertation and his letter (see Appendix J) attests that he found each to be presented accurately.

Ontological authenticity relates to raised levels of awareness of individual research participants. The open-ended manner in which the focus groups and interviews were conducted helped to achieve this. An indicator of ontological authenticity was that students would have a heightened awareness of and capacity to reflect on issues of academic honesty and dishonesty in their learning environment. Given that after students left the focus group setting, I have not

interacted with them again other than to gain transcript releases, I had a narrow window of opportunity to observe any heightened awareness of the issues of academic honesty and dishonesty. Students' engagement in the focus group discussions and questioning of one another and sometimes of their own thought processes and past behaviours suggested increased awareness had occurred. Another indication was that, after the recorder was turned off, I would note a general sense of relief suggesting that the experience of being recorded was not entirely comfortable or natural for students. The comments they would make as they gathered their things and dispersed seemed more free-flowing and often the discussion of academic honesty issues would continue with me or between students, suggesting the students had found the topic engaging if not entirely comfortable. I observed the students say things to each other, like "that was interesting—your story about that prof" or "it's weird that it was so different in [Program X]". Sometimes they would ask me about my findings to date or about what I had noted in the research literature. These questions about the phenomenon suggest *educative authenticity* which involves the attempt to build an appreciation in others for the findings of the research. Joint construction of themes by respondents and myself is key to creating such authenticity. Further educative authenticity for this study is achieved in one regard if readers of the doctoral dissertation with the capacity to influence learning environments gain improved insight and understanding that can assist their activities and the organizational purposes.

Presentation of Analysis

In the fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters of this dissertation I describe the meanings that resulted from my analysis of student focus group data. Throughout, I present direct quotes to bring the student language and style of speaking with one another to the forefront. For readability, students' statements are occasionally modified, in some cases for grammar and clarity, with special attention paid to protecting the expressed meaning. Direct quotes are used throughout the chapters and ellipses are used to show when the quote is part of a longer statement made by that student or to show that some text has been excluded in favour of achieving flow for the reader. To allow for efficient audit of the findings, the code for the transcript and page number follow each quotation and individual speakers are identified by letters A through Q to protect their anonymity. University of Saskatchewan and University of Alberta focus group data are identified in the coding protocol using the abbreviations *U of S* and *U of A*. I identify myself as the speaker using my initials, SLB. Where there were several

similar statements or it was not necessary to provide the direct quote, the code is referenced in parentheses. Because this data set is the result of discussions among students, often several quotes that form a conversation are presented and I refer to these as "discussions" with the code noted at the end of the set of quotes. Whereas, when I present the words of one speaker I refer to this as a comment, observation, remark, response and so on with the code noted at the end of that individual's statement.

Summary of the Study Design and Research Methodology

In this chapter, I have presented the design and methodology and methods used to conduct the study. The study was designed and conducted within the naturalistic paradigm and methods associated with personal experience, phenomenology, and grounded theory were employed. Underlying the study was a metaphor of the student voice which I defined as the meaning that is conveyed by students about what they experience as students. Collecting data from volunteer senior Education students at two Canadian universities, I conducted six focus groups and five interviews (two with policy administrators and three with students) yielding a final data set for analysis of five focus group transcripts. I analyzed the data as openly and free from presupposition as possible, grouped meanings together to form tentative themes that were shifted and rethought during the phases of analysis until final themes, notions, and meanings could be defined. Ethical concerns were addressed by providing participants with full information about risk, obtaining their informed consent, and transcript release.

CHAPTER 4

SUBSTANTIVE CONTENT OF STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF ACADEMIC HONESTY AND DISHONESTY

In this chapter I present descriptions and interpretations of the meanings conveyed by students about the substance of academic honesty and dishonesty. The chapter is presented in two main sections. The first is largely descriptive and is focused on the essential elements of academic honesty and dishonesty in students' understandings. In the second section, I discuss my interpretations of students' meanings and propose that the relationship of the essential elements provides a definition of academic honesty and dishonesty according to students and I suggest these elements also serve as students' principles for culpability for academic dishonesty. Then, I close the chapter with a summary.

Essential Elements of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty in Students' Understandings

The research question addressed in this chapter is: *What is the substantive content of senior undergraduate Education students' expressed understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty?* This question led me to seek the essential nature of academic honesty and dishonesty according to the students in this study, that is, the core qualities or elements that characterize or define the phenomenon for them.

The scenario exercise (described in Chapter 3) that was used to initiate each focus group meeting tended to generate the most discussion (which served as the data) about the essence of academic honesty and dishonesty for students. Students' task in this exercise was to consider scenarios and place them on a visual continuum that had academic honesty and academic dishonesty at opposite ends of the table around which we sat. There were usually only a few scenarios that students placed clearly on one end or the other. Most were placed in between and often with students voicing assumptions or dependencies to explain their placement. Placement of the scenarios led to further discussion amongst the students of the nuances in their understandings that were revisited later in the discussions, especially when I asked the groups the first of the formal questions, "How do you define academic honesty and dishonesty?"

Within this section of the chapter, I first define the concept of *essential elements* and then present each of the three that were apparent to me in the data under separate subheadings where I use the words of the students as well as provide my own interpretations of their meanings.

Definition of Essential Elements

Essential elements are those qualities that students regarded as fundamental to the notion of academic honesty and dishonesty. The term "essential," in this usage, is meant to convey that the element itself is inherent to the nature or essence of the phenomenon; that is, an essential element is indispensible to the notion of academic honesty and dishonesty for students. Three such *essential elements of academic honesty and dishonesty*, as I have named them, were apparent to me in students' understandings: the existence of rules, the intent to break known rules, and the receipt of an unearned grade advantage. Not all students used all of the essential elements explicitly or implicitly, but as an integration of the whole of the discussions these ideas stood out as forming the substantive content of students' understandings.

Existence of Rules as an Essential Element of Academic Dishonesty

Students had a strong rule orientation when offering definitions of academic honesty and dishonesty. They said that rules must exist for the notion of academic honesty and dishonesty to apply and that, primarily, academic dishonesty is about breaking the established rules of academic honesty (examples: D, UofS 1, 5; G-H, UofS 2, 8; I, UofS 3,11; N, UofA 4,11; Q, UofA 5, 3). In addition, some students voiced the view that academic dishonesty was, for them, contradictory to their personal integrity—their own sense of right and wrong (A, UofS 1, 5), their own sense of accomplishment (F, UofS1, 7), their own sense of responsibility and accountability (N, UofA 4, 11), and the quality of their own learning (O, UofA 5, 4). One example of a student statement that integrated integrity, adherence to rules, and student responsibility was:

> F: …I think it's really important to know what your own values are but also to be well aware about what the university standards are. They are out there…I think that we are responsible and once we know what the rules are, and we don't follow them, I think we should be penalized somehow….(UofS 1, 28)

The above student's statement suggests, as did others, that one's personal values can be in conflict with the rules for academic honesty and dishonesty, but the obligation is to follow the rules rather than act consistently with one's values.

While several students talked about balancing their own morality with following the rules, the predominant view was that the established rules define what is considered academically dishonest. Since the clear setting of rules and perplexing nature of rules of referencing, including accounting for original ideas, were important notions within this essential

element of academic honesty and dishonesty in students' understandings, they are presented in this section in greater depth.

Setting the Rules for Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

Students indicated that authority to set the rules can exist at various levels of the institution as well as with the individual professor. They clearly voiced an expectation that professors are to make the rules explicit, but noted that they can implicitly set them as well. These nuances are described in detail under respective headings.

The explicit setting of the rules for academic honesty and dishonesty. While students in this study acknowledged the existence of an overarching institutional policy, they felt it was up to the professor to establish what the specific rules were for the course and for specific assignments. One student expressed this view in this way:

> F:…you have your guidelines from the university about what is acceptable and what isn't. Sometimes professors follow that, sometimes they don't. (UofS 1, 7)

If a professor did not explicitly identify what the expectations were, and whether he or she would follow them as in the comment provided above, then the options were "wide open" as expressed by this student:

> I:… I hate to always put the onus on the professor or the teacher to set [it] out directly, but I think it almost needs to be [done], sometimes. If the intention is to have people work individually on this assignment, it needs to be set out: "this is an individual assignment"….If the professor says, "part of my objective is to have you be able to go find your own research, go through internet libraries and find this" then I think that needs to be set out very clearly. But, if it's wide open, I would have problems with a professor saying, "No, you guys cheated if you worked together too much." If there isn't a declaration made one way or the other, [it] starts to get into a bit of a gray area. But I don't think you can fault people [students] too hard one way or the other on that. (UofS 3,5)

The above student places an onus, as she calls it, on the professor to be more explicit about inherent learning objectives, including all of the anticipated steps of completing the academic task. She suggests that it would be unfair to have students bear the full blame where objectives or rules have not been explicitly stated.

Responding similarly to a scenario about working with a friend on an assignment that the students hand in separately, this student commented:

Q: …I don't know…assuming the collaboration wasn't set out in the instructions, like, it was something you were allowed to do?
SLB: That would matter to you in placing this?
Q: Yeah, 'cause a lot of teachers do say you can collaborate but you just have to hand in one [assignment] so in that case I would probably consider it more honest than if they said no [you can't work together]. (UofA 5,3)

The above statements seem to suggest that professors ought not assume that the request for an individual assignment is understood by students to require exclusively individual work and further suggest that professors ought to take the time to explicate their expectations when it comes to collaborating with others.

The next statement about the seemingly complete reliance on the authority of the teacher or professor to set the rules emphasized the cumulative learning that students experience about what the "rules" are for academic dishonesty:

G: You can't cheat on reading, because we haven't been told that we can cheat on reading. We've been brought up, to be socialized, that *this* is cheating and *this* isn't. That's always the way it's been since kindergarten. So, I think this is perfectly fine because I haven't been told since I was 5 years old that this was cheating. (UofS 2, 16)

These comments and others expressed by students but that are not presented in this section suggest that students regard professors to hold ultimate authority to define academic honesty and dishonesty, including the ability to over-ride the institutional policy, in the context of the classes they teach. Students' expressions suggest that they fully expect their professors to exercise that authority.

The implicit setting of the rules for academic honesty and dishonesty. While students wanted professors to set the rules explicitly, this student said the rules could also be set implicitly by how the professor conducts the class:

Q: …I place a lot of importance on the context just because, I've been here for five years and maybe I'm pretty embittered about certain things, but when it comes to honesty in a class, for me a lot of it depends on what has been going on in the class, how the teachers are conducting their lessons and how much they have given me or outlined to me. If they haven't given clear instructions on something, then I might think there is a little more leeway. (UofA 5, 4)

This student appears to interpret a lack of explicit rule setting to imply either that no rules apply or that the usual rules will only be enforced loosely, if it all. Another student in another group read between the lines that a professor was advising that it was permissible, in fact advisable, to copy:

> C: …their prof told them verbatim that "if you don't have any friends, you're all first year, I would basically say you're not going to make this college on your own. It's not that it's a hard college, you're not going to do this on your own." Basically, in a round-about way, he's giving them the okay to copy assignments. (UofS 1, 6)

This students' conclusion may represent a leap of logic that would be difficult to defend. Nonetheless, comments about implicit rule-setting suggest that students understand there are boundaries within which they are to do their academic work, and in the absence of direction, they will look for cues from their professors about the nature of the rules.

Rules of Referencing and Academic Dishonesty

Students voiced much concern about being perplexed by the rules of referencing. For several students, when asked to define academic dishonesty, they immediately focused on issues of plagiarism and said little about other forms of academic dishonesty like test cheating, unpermitted collaboration, and so on. In discussing rules of referencing, students expressed exasperation about the number of referencing systems and they said they were perplexed by notions of originality in the context of referencing. Each of these understandings is presented in more depth below.

Number and complexity of referencing systems. Some students in this study regarded the various referencing systems, conventions or protocols as arbitrary formatting requirements. Some may even think the choice of system was a matter of personal preference for professors, as the following statement by a student implied:

> M: I think… they try to teach you to try to reference a certain way but then they use a different MLA and you come to Education and it's APA and then you go to another class and you take another reference way and you think to yourself "What is it this time?" (UofA 4, 23)

The above student seemed to express a certain level of exasperation and may reveal that he does not understand that different referencing systems may be employed in different fields of study or academic disciplines. In the following exchange, the students describe their anxiety and concern

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about not understanding how to reference, especially when they feel a professor is going to be quite diligent about it:

> E: You get nervous when professors are that way. What would they say is honest or dishonest? She [the highly diligent prof] says any thoughts, expressions, anything…Expressions?...
> F: But even ideas you have to cite…If you have an idea that didn't come directly from your mind, you have to cite that. That raises the whole question about whether it came from your mind or it came from discussion with another person. Do you cite the person? Or, do you cite the person who told that person? It's just a bit too much. (UofS 1, 18)

Similar to the above discussion, in another group two students commiserated that they both lacked confidence in their referencing skills and this student described her approach to writing essays and referencing this way:

> J:…I just get all the points from all the books and group them together then write my essays, then [I wonder] where did I get this stuff from? So, I would just start adding in dates and names and stuff like that….if you needed five references or something like that and I only used one book, then I'd just stick in references. I don't know. I never took someone else's ideas and said that they were mine, but I would add in different references to make the reference quota. To me, I don't really think that's academic dishonesty…it didn't help my essay writing skills, that's for sure…and I didn't say "this is my idea" or [copy] a whole page or something. No, I sure didn't. I still don't think I reference a paper properly. (UofS 3, 9)

While the above approach may be a surprisingly unsophisticated method for a university student near graduation, it also points to a rule-orientation among the students. This orientation may explain why a suggested number of references for an assignment of this nature becomes regarded as a "quota" and becomes the preoccupying force.

In only one instance in the focus group discussions did a student indicate an understanding that referencing provided a way to respect and honour the work of researchers and academics (B, UofS 1, 5). The absence of other comments of this nature during what were usually fairly lengthy lines of discussion about referencing conventions suggest that students do not understand the scholarly principles that referencing conventions support. Students appeared to regard referencing as a way to protect against plagiarism and did not see it as a way to

effectively build an argument, document previous thinking or research, or to map the literature in a field of study.

Plagiarism and notions of originality. Relating to a sense of exasperation and fear of incompetence related to referencing, discussion in each of the groups included students voicing that they were perplexed by notions of originality. Sometimes this was expressed using the idea of authenticity in assignments and other times as aligning with the idea of intellectual property. Most often this was voiced as concern for students' own ability to be original and to recognize if what they were writing was in fact truly original to them. Some were concerned about their own original and authentic thought being stifled by the expectations of university-level assignments for integration of the ideas of others. The following excerpts from students, in two different groups, reveal this kind of self-doubt:

> N: I've gotta say, I have a question overall with knowing what is my original work? I don't know anything that hasn't been taught to me. I'd like to give myself more credit than that, but at what point am I thinking I'm writing something original but really it's some little memory cell in the back going: "oh, flash, remember how great this paragraph sounded" and it comes back to me and I'm like: "Oh, that's good." I'm writing it out. Is that my own work? I understand directly quoting or paraphrasing, yes, you source it. But how much of it is ideas that you've learned from a prof or just from your life experiences, how do you source that? What's appropriate there? I've never understood. (UofA 4,8)
> A: ..So we take all the things we've been listening to, right now, and we try to put them into our own words, we're remembering phrases that somebody said over here and over there, doesn't that make you dishonest? (UofS 1, 11)

Just as the above students wondered about how to deal with ideas gained through experience, dealing with common knowledge in referencing conventions was also perplexing as expressed by this student:

> P: Like in paper references they don't expect you to reference common knowledge, but what is common knowledge? If they say, "why didn't you reference this" or "you plagiarized this" when really it's like, "the sky is blue." We all know that it's blue and you don't need a book to tell you it's blue. (UofA 5, 6)

Related to concerns for originality are notions of students' own intellectual property. Students debated this in each focus group when they responded to a scenario that read: Making a few small changes to a paper you wrote for a class last year and submitting it for another class.

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Of all the scenarios, this engaged students the most in discussion as students had differing views on this practice and some believed it to be strictly prohibited according to campus policies. About half of the students remarking on this scenario were dismayed that this could be viewed as academically dishonest because it was "your own work." Some admitted to having resubmitted their own work and one described considering such a practice as academic dishonesty to be "ridiculous." Two examples of comments by the students who were asked to place this scenario on the continuum follow:

> O: That one's kind of hard. A bit closer to honesty because I guess we weren't writing it specifically for that class, and yet you still wrote it originally yourself. It may not be that you don't have the knowledge needed to write it, it's just you might not have the time or something like that came up. So I think that's more over here [honesty]… (UofA 5, 2)
> I: …I've done that, I don't find a problem with it. It's your paper. I suppose again if the professor/teacher put it in as a set guide that either said in the course outline, or campus wide, then it would change my opinion but if it's your work and it fit the assignment then if it only needs some small tweaking or even as is, the objectives are being met. It's your work. I don't have a problem about that. (UofS 3, 5-6)

One student said this scenario about resubmitting one's own work for another purpose was a "tricky one." H thought that it was acceptable to resubmit previous work for a different course because it was "your original work, hopefully" but would regard it as more dishonest if the student in question had incorporated the previous professor's feedback and improved the paper on that basis without having asked permission to do so (N, UofA 4, 2). This same student, reacting to another student's statement that re-submitting past work could be considered a form of dishonesty depending on the circumstances, said "Self-plagiarism….that just seems insane. You plagiarize yourself? I don't even see how you can do that?" His fellow discussant agreed and admitted having done this herself for a couple of assignments before she was told it was against the rules. She said she had thought: "…whatever, yeah, you get to use one paper for two different classes, you're killing two birds with one stone. I thought that was fine" (J, UofS 3, 6). Believing that the stated rules define this situation as academic dishonesty, the students in this discussion were in agreement that what matters is following the rules, whether you agree with them or not:

H: …this whole handing in your own paper a second time I may not agree with it, but it's a rule.

G: Yeah, I don't view it as academic dishonesty but it's the rule that you can't do it, so I choose not to.

H: Yeah (UofS 2, 8)

Complaining that professors do not give different enough assignments within his Education degree program, in essence inviting students to resubmit a previous assignment, one student said:

H: ….to me it's your own words, just because, like, if profs are giving you assignments that are that similar, to me that's saying profs don't have their act together in designing their courses. So, as long as it's all your own work. (UofS 2, 2)

To which the other student in the group responded:

G: if you did all this work, to get this done, why do you have to do all the same work again, to write a paper that's going to say the exact same thing but worded differently? (UofS 2, 2)

This more lengthy discussion in another group incorporated many of the concerns voiced in the other groups and showed the reliance on rules to define academic dishonesty, even if students disagree with those rules:

F: …Making a few small changes to a paper you submitted for another class and I personally don't think that that's honest. I think it's dishonest.

E: Just because of the policies that are laid out before us, it says you're not supposed to use the same paper

F: And personally, I think it's dishonest but also the university has said so. So, some people might not think that that's dishonest.

C: Which in my case I don't think the university stipulates that that's wrong, which means—

B: If two professors give you the same type of assignments, there's nothing wrong with handing it in.

D: It's your work.

F: If they were the same assignment, like two papers that were exactly the same. I think that would be—

B: Let's say you have a paper in Native Studies about social justice issues and then you have a paper here in this college and the same paper fits. I probably wouldn't hand in the exact same paper, some of your examples or your references would be different.   But as far as using the same ideas and the same thesis

statement, I know a lot of profs I asked outright…what's the point of doing 30 pages of work all over again for the exact same [result]

A: I think it depends too on which college you're in. If you were to do that in say…in some programs and they knew that you were doing it in the same sort of area and somehow they talk and even if you asked them and they said yes, then I don't know, to me there's still a question about which areas and which programs

D: To me, I think this belongs more over there [indicated honesty sign on the table from scenario exercise]. Assignments you create are your intellectual property. I think you do whatever you want with that, because it's yours. (UofS 1, 2-3)

Apparent in the discussion, above, are conflicting understandings about the learning objectives for assignments and about notions of intellectual property. The view that if previous work meets the requirements for a new class, it can be resubmitted is in conflict with a view that students must achieve new benefits in their learning as a result of each assignment. The view that one need not reference previous work because it is one's own intellectual property is in conflict with acknowledging past work and building upon it as part of a scholarly endeavor. For those who believe this practice is not academic dishonesty, there was no mention that they tell their professors that they are submitting a past assignment. Being secretive rather than forthcoming with this information may suggest that students endorsing this practice know it might not receive approval from their professors. Students most certainly did not agree on where such an act would fall on the honesty-dishonesty continuum but expected the rules employed by an individual professor should ultimately determine whether it was considered acceptable.

Intent to Break Known Rules as an Essential Element of Academic Dishonesty

Students said that intent must be present for the notion of academic honesty or dishonesty to apply. Students in every focus group discussed intent as a fundamentally important distinction to be made in defining whether an act was academically dishonest. The importance placed on intent was apparent in the scenario placement exercise as students would often say that the placement depended on whether a student had understood what he or she was doing and had intentionally broken known rules. When students provided their definitions of academic honesty and dishonesty, knowingly breaking the rules was a key feature as these excerpts show:

I: …if you're doing it accidentally or if you're doing it because you don't know proper ways of citing work, then…the intention isn't to do it. If you're mixing up a few dates so that you know the prof isn't going to be able to look up this work

for whatever reason, whether you stole half of it or whether it doesn't exist—or any number of things, then it's just like, dishonest…. (UofS 3, 8-9)

J: …Dishonesty is knowing that you did. You know when you cheat or when you copy something…. (UofS 3, 13)

O: …I think it was more on the 'on purpose' part of it [that caused me to say it is academic dishonesty]. If you forgot you had it [a library book on two hour reserve], that's different. (UofA 5, 1)

G: …If you are aware that you are doing something wrong, then you are doing something academically dishonest. Some people make oversights that are, maybe fall into the category of academic dishonesty, but aren't done purposefully. I think that would maybe just be ignorance. You know? (UofS 2, 5)

H: [Academic honesty is]…not using anyone else's stuff without giving them credit. If you're doing that, that's honest.…I'd say as long as you are not knowingly using somebody else's material.

As exemplified by the above statements and by other discussions among the students in this study, it appeared to be a commonly held belief that if students do not know that a certain act is prohibited or they do not understand how to follow the rules, as in following referencing protocols, then the result should be regarded as a mistake rather than an act of academic dishonesty. The distinction was important to these students although several recognized that ignorance or mere mistakenness was unlikely to be an adequate defense. Knowledge of the rules and the role of competence in enacting the rules as necessary for choice were key ideas in students' discussions of intent as an essential element of academic honesty and dishonesty. These two areas are discussed below.

Knowledge of the Rules

Some students speculated that students really do not understand or are not aware of the rules regarding academic dishonesty. Having knowledge was identified as a requirement to make the intentional choice to cheat. The ways students learn of the rules about academic dishonesty were expressed in the following comments:

N: I think a lot of people honestly don't know. I know in my first year, I had no clue. They were talking about some Chicago format and I'm thinking…what, Chicago? I just don't think you have any preparation for it and I don't know where I've learned it… Probably from friends who have gone through it, parents,you know. (UofA 4, 22)

I: …most students, no matter where they are, they don't read the student handbook. Lord knows I haven't gone through to read everything other than

what is given out on a syllabus by a prof. But, that isn't the complete document. And, I haven't [sought that out]... I just went by, "Okay, they didn't say anything about handing in last year's work." ... (UofS 3, 7)

These selected comments suggest that some students do not familiarize themselves with the rules regarding academic dishonesty when directed to do so and instead gain their understandings, such as they are, through direct experience and through guidance from others. It does not appear from these statements that students receive direct education or training on what constitutes academic dishonesty and how to avoid it.

Students had varying views on where the responsibility lied for them learning the rules for academic honesty, with some feeling that students were expected to be responsible for knowing the rules and others feeling that these rules should be proactively taught to them, if not by the professor of a specific class, then as part of the first year curriculum or some other standard offering. This discussion in one group presents some of these kinds of views:

N: My biggest problem is that they tell you in every single course, don't cheat, don't cheat, they put the agreement [policy statement] on every syllabus. Who's ever told us what cheating was? Has anyone ever had a prof that told them what was considered cheating?
M: It's supposedly to be read in a section of our manual.
L: Who does that?
M: They all talk about it, first day, go see that page on whatever about that rule.
K: But, I have heard them talk about it when they are assigning them, like I had a history prof last year, pretty clear, "You're writing an essay and don't do *this*"
N: I kind of think that by the time you're entering university, when you apply, when you sign the papers, you're agreeing to act by this code. You're taking it under your own responsibility to go and read [it]. It's the same as knowing your deadlines for application, withdrawals, all that. I think it's a personal accountability thing... (UofA 4, 11)

Students, in the above discussion, seemed to recognize that they have been given the opportunity to become familiar with the policies on academic honesty and dishonesty but were frank in admitting that they had not done so. They knew they ought to become familiar with these rules but also suggested that if knowing them was of such great importance to their professors then they should make the time in class to explain.

Students described their learning about what constitutes academic dishonesty as incremental, that is, they saw it as occurring over time in small pieces as they advanced in years

at university. Several told personal stories about professors showing them their error in referencing and teaching them how to do so correctly, warning that they were at risk of being found to have plagiarized. In one group I asked specifically, "How do students learn what the rules are for referencing or avoiding plagiarism or other kinds of standards of honesty or dishonesty? How do you know?" and this discussion followed:

> O: I think a lot of it you know on your own. You find out on your own. Teachers will say, you have to use the APA format for referencing but it's up to you to go find out what that is. And, they'll just, at the beginning, on a course outline they give you these same sheets in every single class about the policies and plagiarism and this and that....you hear from other students too, like, or professors sometimes tell you worst case scenarios that have happened to them in the past. A lot of word of mouth and research, not really research on your own, if you want to go look at it, then you can find out if you want to.
> P: More…about self experience, sort of thing.
> Q: I think I've learned from various classes, one or two bits of information from each one. It wasn't even that long ago, maybe in my first couple of years in university where some professor says you can't—just because you insert a few extra words in a quote doesn't mean you don't have to reference it, and I'm like "What?" I thought that was making it my own, but no, of course not. And so—little things along the way. If the idea is not yours you still have to reference it even if it's not a quote, so I think, different classes….
> SLB: So you know a lot more now than you knew when you were in first year?
> All: Oh Ya
> P: And in first year, when they said, APA format, I'm like, a what? And, now I pretty much know it off the top of my head, at least most of it. So, yeah. (UofA 5, 9-10)

The preceding discussion highlights that having the knowledge necessary to be able to choose to be academically honest and thereby avoid academic dishonesty was important to students but that their achievement of that knowledge was not reported to occur on single occasions or in systematic ways. This may explain their concern voiced here and elsewhere in this chapter that students may inadvertently engage in academic dishonesty because they do not understand what it is.

Competence and Choice in Adhering to the Rules

Students made no comments about their competence to conform to academic honesty in exam writing situations. Although they were aware that some students do cheat in exams, they

were apparently confident in their understanding that actions like bringing in crib notes and copying were not allowed and confident that they were competent enough to avoid engaging in these behaviours. However, students expressed real concern about their competence to properly apply the rules of referencing, as described earlier in this chapter. Several students expressed appreciation for professors who note a student's failure to cite a reference or even suspect plagiarism and then give the student an opportunity to respond, explain, or learn. They saw enhancing students' competence in maintaining academic honesty as a desirable alternative for professors to choose rather than to proceed directly to a formal procedure (procedures that students know little about other than that they exist). One student told of a personal experience where she believed that the professor recognized that she had inadvertently plagiarized but gave her the opportunity to learn from her mistakes:

> M: I had that in my first year too, in English 101. One of my papers—I didn't reference it properly and I didn't reference where the quote came from. So, on the paper the professor asked me to go see her after class, see her in her office. Then we kind of talked it out and she found out that I didn't do it on purpose. It was just because I didn't know MLA, or whatever necessary style that we had to follow. Then, so, she talked to me and then basically it didn't happen again. So, I think that was, it wasn't, I guess it was academically dishonest because I didn't read clearly what I was supposed to do but I guess she didn't reprimand me for doing it. (UofA 4, 10)

Similar to the appreciation expressed towards the professor in the above student's statement, others were grateful for professors who identified students' mistakes, then warned them, and taught them what to do in the future, with one student feeling like the professors could have (or possibly should have according to policy) reported him to a formal body (L, A4, 8).

This exchange between two students integrated the ideas of intent and following the rules:

> H: For me, it's only dishonest if you don't admit that you got their idea at all, if you're claiming it as your own But, if it's just that you weren't using the referencing style properly, or something like that, okay, you screwed up referencing but you weren't trying to take it as your own idea
> G: Yeah, I would lean toward the honesty pile on that case, but
> H: If it's just mis-cited
> G: You get the page number wrong. You're doing it in MLA instead of APA.

H: If you knowingly take a whole quote because it's really well said and just slide it in there and don't cite it at all, I think that's dishonest.

G: Yeah, that's totally dishonest.

SLB: Sort of depends on what you intend?

H: Yeah, if you tried to cite it, you put a footnote in and somehow in your editing it gets erased and in your proof reading you don't pick it up. I don't think that's dishonest, that's just a mistake. If you slide it in there knowingly. That's dishonesty, I think. (UofS 2, 3)

This discussion shows that students understand there to be considerations of degree in referencing errors. They acknowledged those errors that are arrived at by commission or omission. They also recognized that there are matters of degree in intent relating this to the level of deception involved. For example, in several discussions, students said they would be surprised by forms of academic dishonesty that require a lot of planning in advance, like putting cheat notes in a bathroom stall or stealing an answer key, because it suggests greater intentionality over an extended time period. Students in this study thought it more likely that students would be dishonest as a last stitch effort to complete an assignment or gain an advantage.

Unearned Grade Advantage as an Essential Element of Academic Dishonesty

Students said that a grade advantage must be accrued on a given academic task for the notion of academic honesty or dishonesty to apply. Describing academic honesty and dishonesty in this way did not illicit discussion or debate among the students in the focus groups. Students take having grade outcomes at stake to be a self-evident and essential element for the notion of academic honesty and dishonesty. I presume from students' clarity in this regard that, for them, the notion of academic honesty and dishonesty does not then apply to academic work that is not graded. Their understandings, however, appeared to go further than the requirement that the work in question be graded in that there must be an unearned grade advantage that results from the actions potentially considered as academically dishonest. When a less direct tie could be made to a grade outcome, students views about what constitutes academic honesty and dishonesty diverged and often they indicated they found the concept ambiguous in such cases. What follows is my presentation, under respective headings, of the certainty and uncertainty students experience in understanding academic honesty and dishonesty related to unearned grade advantages.

Students' Certainty of Academic Dishonesty in Cases of Direct Grade Advantages

Students discussed several scenarios regarding grade outcomes and academic honesty and dishonesty, some that I introduced and others that they had presented to each other in discussion. An understanding that notions of academic honesty and dishonesty apply when the academic work in question is assigned a grade was consistently expressed by students. Several students asserted this understanding in clearly definitional terms. An example of such a comment from a student follows:

> N: …where I think it starts to get into dishonesty is where anything you're submitting for marks is not completely authentic… (UofA 4, 4)

This student's definition of academic dishonesty focuses on academic work that receives grades. She does not say an unearned grade must result, but does delimit matters of academic honesty and dishonesty to concern only graded work. Another student put the importance of grades in defining academic honesty and dishonesty this way:

> G: I think because we've been brought up to view cheating as stuff we hand in--
> we cheat on our tests because we hand them in, or we cheat on our papers because
> we hand them in, or [on] math tests because you hand them in. (UofS 2, 16)

This suggests that grades are inherent in acts of academic dishonesty and that this has been apparent to the student since early on in his education. His comment even presents the relationship as one of cause and effect, that is, being graded leads to cheating.

Comments along this vein in two of the focus groups led me to pose an impromptu question about what would happen in terms of academic dishonesty if there were no grades assigned to academic work. Response in both groups included a general acknowledgement as to the extreme shift in philosophy such a change would represent. One student said that if there were no grades, there would be no reason to be dishonest and that students would produce more authentic work. He said that "formatting" requirements like using "APA style" distract students from focusing on writing papers about their own ideas that could prove useful in the future and contrasted this with "contriving some assignment into something a professor is going to really enjoy" (G, UofS 2, 24-25). Similarly, in the other group that I asked "Would students be dishonest if there weren't grades?" their discussion was as follows:

> D: I don't think so. I don't think they would at all. I think that would almost cut
> it out.

E: I think everybody would be the same. Everybody would try to help each other out.

C: You'd get a lot more cooperation. Ethics classes [for example] where you state your opinion, you'd get a lot more of what they [students] believe and not what the professor believes. You'd get a lot higher quality work. (UofS 1, 20-21)

These comments suggest that, for students, competition for grades precludes cooperation and it is inferred in the last of the comments that collaborating with fellow students would lead students to focus less on what they believe it takes to get the grade they seek and instead improve their academic achievement through improved authenticity. Later, in a discussion in this same group, one student referred to a friend's experience interning in Australia where he said only "pass" or "fail" were used as grades and reported that: "it's mind blowing, just the tension of marks is absent" (D, UofS 1, 21) to which another student replied, that he had heard from a friend of his who had also interned in Australia that it became "hard to motivate kids" without having grades at stake (B, UofS 1, 21). For students, grades appear to be a fundamental feature of their learning environments that, if dramatically changed or eliminated, would require fundamental change of the educational system itself.

Students' Uncertainty of Academic Dishonesty in Cases of Indirect Grade Advantages

While students in this study appeared to draw the same conclusions that acts that result in students receiving an unearned grade advantage are academically dishonest, there was little consensus about acts for which a grade advantage is less apparent or direct. I have organized students' more divergent views and the ambiguity students appear to experience in this regard under four subheadings that deal with questions of doing one's "fair share" in collaborative work, trying to sabotage others, failing to report those who cheat, and taking "shortcuts" in learning. Much of the discussion of this nature surrounded the exercise where students placed scenarios on a continuum of academic honesty and dishonesty.

Doing one's "fair share" in collaborative work. One of the scenarios provided to students was a case where the act being judged as academically honest or dishonest involved a student failing to do his or her fair share of a group assignment. The comments students made in response to this scenario varied as shown in the following quotes:

H: …you're being a jerk but you're not doing anything illegal. I mean everybody knows that when you've got a group project there's always the risk that not everyone's going to pull their weight or someone's going to do extra, or

whatever. That's just kind of the—it happens, not saying I like it. I wouldn't think it deserves to be considered dishonest. (UofS 2, 1)

I: …if it [not doing your fair share] was for the specific purpose of lowering other people's marks, well then, okay. Even then, that's not even academic honesty or dishonesty, that's just kind of being a weasel, being a poor colleague or something. I just think it doesn't fit into my conception of what academic honesty and dishonesty is. (UofS 3, 2)

L: …you have your obligation to put in equal effort but group members have to hold you accountable, too. So, it's not dishonesty but it's not honest, I guess. (UofA 4, 2)

The above comments suggest that students are quite familiar with the scenario where not everyone involved in a group project contributes equally. This seems to be a recognized flaw in group work in their experience that they regard not as academic dishonesty but as an indicator of a problem of character or as social inappropriateness on the part of the offending student.

Trying to sabotage others. Another of the contested scenarios was about intentionally keeping others from accessing library materials held on reserve. The scenario generated an array of student comments as shown below:

F: I have [as a scenario to place] keeping a book on two hour reserve for two days, on purpose. Um, I think it's somewhere in the middle. I don't think it's completely honest or dishonest. (UofS 1, 2)

G: …To me, that's no problem with that, you're kind of cheating other people a little with that. But, it's not academic dishonesty. (UofS 2, 1)

I: … I don't really see that fitting in to academic honesty or dishonesty. I think that's just more of being kind of a knob. I don't see it fitting into the realm of dishonesty. I think it's fitting into the realm of being not a very good person, colleague or student. (UofS 3, 1)

N: So, I'm assuming that means you're keeping it so other people can't use it? That's just rude….Definitely. I think that's completely dishonest because it's disallowing other people the opportunity to do their best and to be judged comparatively against them. Helping yourself. I think that's dishonest. (UofA 4, 3)

Disapproval of those who sabotage the efforts of fellow students to perform to their potential is clear in these selected quotes from students' discussions. While for some, this was academically dishonest, for others it was—as failing to do one's fair share had been—an indicator of a flawed personal character. Students in this study said that they had not encountered such sabotage

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themselves, but did say that they had "heard" of such behaviour among students who were highly competitive for grades for a variety of reasons.

Failing to report those who cheat. Another scenario more distant from advantaging a student's own grade was failing to report another student who had been observed to cheat during an exam. Noticing others cheat in exam situations seemed to be a familiar scenario to students who participated in this study and some actively shared their conclusions from their own past experience with this situation. Students from two different groups saw it this way:

> H: Seeing a classmate cheating with crib notes on an exam and not reporting her to your professor. Same thing, it's dishonesty. Whether or not I would report her or not, hard to say, yeah, but it's still dishonest. If you know that it's going on and you don't say anything, then you're an accomplice, I guess. (UofS 2, 3)
>
> L: …I think it's academically dishonest but not so much for the person [observing the cheating] themselves but for the fact that everyone is being compared and this person is cheating…it's a touchy issue and it would be really tough to decide. (UofA 4, 1)

These two students acknowledge that some responsibility could be applied to them when they do not report another student's academic dishonesty, but they did not indicate that they would report in such a scenario. In students' reflections about this scenario they either recognized themselves as having failed to act or, more often, assigned responsibility to their professors for a lack of diligence or care about academic dishonesty—a notion discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

Taking shortcuts in learning. Students, especially when the conversation turned to matters of plagiarism and originality, speculated about whether actions they regarded as learning strategies, like having someone proofread a paper or referring to a friend's previously completed assignment, could be defined as academic dishonesty. Students more often regarded these as sound learning strategies. Following one student's defining of academic honesty as work that is completely authentic; this student posed this question about incorporating feedback from a proofreader:

> M: My question is, if you're asking someone to read your essay and they basically told you all the changes that you should make and then you just did all the changes and submitted that, is that considered cheating then…the person has caught all these [mistakes] and makes you make changes to it and then you just submitted it…you're submitting that assignment for marks but you got a better mark because of that. Is that [academic dishonesty]? (UofA4, 4)

Similarly, in response to some of the scenarios, students wondered about the appropriateness of viewing old exams or past assignments of students who had already taken the class or working with a classmate on an assignment to be submitted individually. No one in the groups said they thought of such acts as severe cases of academic dishonesty. Some said such acts were academically honest, while several thought the notion did not even apply because these were simply sound strategies for being a successful student. One student said she only shared her assignments with select friends whom she knew would not copy but would view her work as a model or approach, get some ideas, and then do their own work (J, UofS 3, 15).

Taking the notion of shortcuts in another direction, two students had a lengthy and interesting discussion when one brought up his practice in one class of reading synopses of Shakespeare's plays rather than reading the plays themselves. His fellow discussant said that she did not think that was dishonest, but that it was a way to budget time and a learning strategy that would have allowed him to attend class prepared enough to find out what the professor thought was important in each play. However, as our discussion went on, the first student began to wonder if his behaviour had been what he called "borderline" dishonesty or whether it was an acceptable shortcut, commenting that he had received a grade of 75% in the class and had only read five out of 15 plays that were assigned.

Acts that students largely thought of as either timesavers or shortcuts or as valid strategies provided rich debate with the discussion most often arriving at a conclusion of sorts that such acts are permissible in a context of academic honesty and dishonesty, unless they have been strictly prohibited by professors. And yet, it did not seem that these students would be inclined to reveal these strategies to their professors, suggesting that they may know that their professors might evaluate these acts differently.

Discussion of Students' Essential Elements of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

Students identified three essential elements in their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty. In this section, I summarize these findings and discuss my interpretation that they serve as a baseline definition for academic dishonesty that suggests principles for culpability for academic dishonesty in students' understandings.

Students regard the existence of rules for academic honesty and dishonesty as an essential element in their understandings and expect the rules to be set by their professors. If professors do not do so explicitly, then students said they search for implicit cues in what professors say and

how they conduct their classes. Students' reliance on such rules, whether they themselves agree with them or not, suggests that students see academic dishonesty as a matter of rule-breaking. Related to the rules of academic dishonesty, and of concern to students, were referencing conventions. Some said that they find referencing rules complex and perceive them as arbitrary—expressing doubt in their ability to avoid inadvertent plagiarism in particular. Some students expressed frustration about the use of a number of referencing systems with a sense that they found it confusing if not unfair to expect students to follow different rules in different classes. Students did not agree on the notion that one person called "self-plagiarism" with some believing submitting the same work for two different classes was prohibited and some thinking it was the right of the student to use what they called their "intellectual property" as they saw fit. The solution to this controversy among the students was to defer to the rules, once again suggesting that the existence of rules is an essential element of academic honesty and dishonesty in students' understandings.

The second essential element presented in this chapter was students' view that intent to be academically dishonest was necessary to call an act academic dishonesty. A student who made a mistake or who did not understand the rules, according to these students should not be regarded as academically dishonest. Inadvertent plagiarism was a particular concern revealed in discussions about intent. The fear of being accused of plagiarism may be connected to students' sense that they have learned how to reference by happenstance over time and do not feel they have thoroughly understood how to cite sources appropriately.

It appeared to be self-evident to students that in order for the notion of academic honesty or dishonesty to apply, the academic work in question had to be assigned a grade. That is, non-graded work could not have the notion of academic honesty or dishonesty applied to it. Moving beyond this fundamental requirement, it was clear that students' definitiveness about what is and is not academic dishonesty faded when the act in question was less directly advantageous for the actor in terms of grades. If a student prevents others from earning the best grade possible or fails to report others' dishonesty or takes questionable short cuts in the learning of the material, this does not unanimously qualify as academic dishonesty for the students in this study. Some students were more apt to regard students who attempt to sabotage others or who fail to do their fair share as having other personal flaws beyond or at least differing from academic dishonesty. Through analysis of the diverging views expressed about the various scenarios by students in this

study, I interpret that there was more agreement among the students that an act was academically dishonest when the act resulted directly in a grade advantage that they saw as unearned.

A Baseline Definition of Academic Dishonesty in Students' Understandings

I found that most often, the essential elements described in this chapter, appeared in students' expressions individually or sometimes two at a time. One exception, where all three appeared to be present, was in this student's response to the question, how do you define academic dishonesty:

> I: To define it, I would say, to knowingly and almost maliciously set out to circumvent the rules for your own gain. I think that's pretty much the gist of it…. (UofS 3, 13)

The above student has incorporated intent, rules, and personal gain (presumably referring to a grade advantage) into her definition. Building on what students expressed and the occurrence of this single integration, I extrapolate that students in this study would agree that an act was academically dishonest when all three essential elements were present at the same time. Figure 4.1 depicts my interpretation of the relationship of the essential elements in students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty and the resulting definition of academic dishonesty.
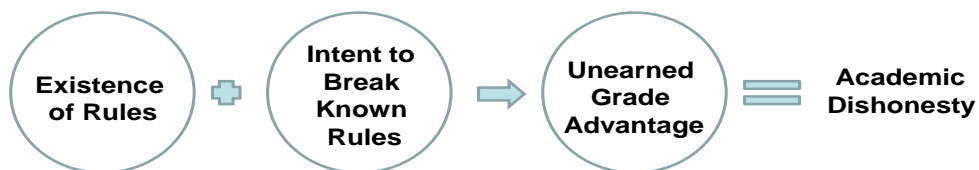
Figure 4.1 Students' Baseline Definition of Academic Dishonesty

A verbal definition of the above depiction of the relationship between the essential elements is expressed as follows:

> *Academic dishonesty is the intentional breaking of rules for academic honesty that result in an unearned grade advantage for the offending student.*

Adding the extensive nuance in students' understandings described in this chapter, a more comprehensive definition reads:

> *Academic dishonesty is the intentional breaking of known rules for academic honesty (as stated or implied by a professor) by a student who fully understands those rules (and is competent to enact them) and who receives, as a result of his or her act or behaviour, an unearned grade advantage over others in his or her comparator group.*

Even though it is more expansive, the above definition should be understood as minimalist in nature, that is, it presents the notion of academic dishonesty at its most basic. I propose it serves as a baseline in students' understanding and speculate that all of the students who participated in this study, if presented with this definition, would find it acceptable.

When I prodded students for their definition of academic honesty in discussions that largely seemed to focus on what makes an act academic dishonesty, students sometimes framed it as merely the absence or non-occurrence of academic dishonesty. In some cases, however, students used broader and less rule-bound concepts such as authenticity and truthfulness to express their view of academic honesty. Fairness as a value in the assessment of grades relative to peers appeared to be important in students' understandings of academic honesty. Earning the grades one receives, regardless of where that grade places a student in relation to his or her peers, was the key to fairness in this context. Unlike my sense that the findings of this study reveal a baseline definition of academic dishonesty that all the students in this study would find acceptable, I do not reach the same conclusion for the notion of academic honesty. Perhaps this is because it is a more complex idea for students to discuss compared to what appeared to be largely a shared view that academic dishonesty could fundamentally be reduced to an occasion of intentional rule-breaking for personal gain.

Three Principles for Culpability in Students' Understandings

It was noteworthy that the essential elements of academic honesty and dishonesty were often framed by students as the conditions under which academic dishonesty could be said to have occurred. Apparent was students' recognition that they could be culpable—deserving of blame or punishment—for academic dishonesty. Reframing the students' definition of academic dishonesty in such terms, a student is deserving of blame for academic dishonesty when the student has gained an unearned grade advantage by breaking existing rules that he or she was capable of following and knowingly made the choice to disregard. Expanding on this notion allows the students' essential elements to be translated into the principles of culpability described below:

Principle of Awareness: To be culpable for academic dishonesty, the student must understand the rules for academic honesty and dishonesty. To be regarded as having understood the rules, the student needed to both know that the rules existed and be competent to follow those rules.

Principle of Volition: To be culpable for academic dishonesty, the student must freely choose to break the rules for academic honesty and dishonesty. To be regarded as having made a free choice, the student needed to have been aware of and considered the alternatives to breaking the rules and made the choice to do so anyway.

Principle of Effect: To be culpable for academic dishonesty, the student must benefit from his or her actions by receiving an unearned grade advantage. To be regarded as having an unearned grade benefit, the student's actions need to have resulted in an advantage for the completion of academic work that was not available to other students.

Figure 4.2 depicts the ways the essential elements may occur together and how the principles of culpability will come into effect, using this interpretation of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty.

Inadvertent error
e.g., Student ignorant of proper referencing protocol misrepresents authorship of a web-based resource = *Lack of volition*

No grade effect
e.g., Student defers exam due to illness and studies answers to questions revealed by a classmate, but different questions appear on the deferred exam than the original = *Lack of effect*

Rules

Intent

Academic Dishonesty
e.g., Student, knowing notes are prohibited in an exam, uses them and receives a better grade as a result = *Culpable*

Unearned Grade Advantage

No rules broken
e.g., Students extensively collaborate on an assignment for which the professor has not stated that collaboration is prohibited = *Lack of awareness*

Figure 4.2 Students' Principles for Culpability for Academic Dishonesty

Summarized further, students adhering to these principles and sitting on a disciplinary panel for academic dishonesty would ask these questions to determine culpability: (1) did the student understand the rules that applied to the academic work; (2) did the student freely choose to break the rules anyway; and (3) did the student's actions result in a grade advantage unavailable to others. If the answer is yes to all three of these questions, the three principles for culpability have been met and a student is blameworthy or guilty of academic dishonesty.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, described were findings that addressed the first research question: *What is the substantive content of senior Education students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty?* The focus was on elements students said were essential to academic dishonesty. To have been categorized as an essential element, students needed to have described a concept as core to academic dishonesty, that is, a characteristic that must be present to correctly apply the concept of academic dishonesty. Figure 4.3 shows the essential elements in the inner circle on the left as being the existence of rules for academic honesty and dishonesty, the intentional breaking of those rules, and a resulting unearned grade advantage.
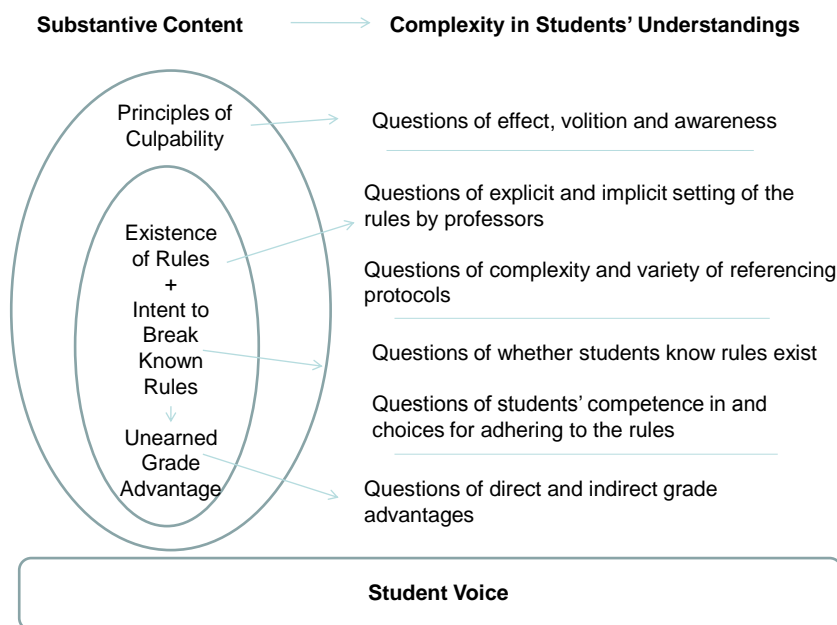
Figure 4.3 The Substantive Content and Related Complexities of Students' Understandings of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

These three essential elements were proposed to provide a baseline definition of academic dishonesty that translated into principles of culpability in students understanding, as shown in the outer circle of Figure 4.3. Explored throughout the chapter were the many nuances in students' understanding such as how the rules are set; how students come to know and understand the rules for academic honesty and dishonesty; the concerns they feel for their competence to enact the rules, especially related to matters of plagiarism and originality; how students see acts or behaviours that appear to have less direct impact on grades or may serve as efficient strategies rather than dishonest shortcuts. These are summarized in Figure 4.3, on the right-hand side, as complexities in students' understandings. The metaphor of the student voice appears across the bottom of Figure 4.3 to indicate that the meanings presented and discussed in this chapter came from what students said about their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty.

CHAPTER 5

STRUCTURES OF STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF
ACADEMIC HONESTY AND DISHONESTY

In this chapter I present descriptions and interpretations of the structures revealed in students' understandings academic honesty and dishonesty. The first section of the chapter is largely descriptive and focused on three structures apparent in students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty. In the second section, I discuss the findings in terms of a framework for situational risk analysis that these structures may serve and then in terms of the ways students appeared to rationalize their choices. Then, I close the chapter with a summary.

Structures of Students' Understandings of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

The research question addressed in this chapter is: *How do senior Education students structure their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty?* This question led me to search for the key ideas that appeared to provide frames or foundations for students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty.

By far, the most prevalent overarching notion of a structural nature voiced by students was that how they understood matters of academic honesty and dishonesty depended on the situations. Comments of this nature were present in all the focus group discussions despite being largely unsolicited in their content. Careful review of students' description of their reliance on situational considerations in their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty revealed a more specific set of structures: enticements to academic dishonesty, deterrents to academic dishonesty, and likelihoods of unwanted outcomes from academic dishonesty.

Within this section of the chapter, I first define the concept of structures of understanding and then present each of the three structures that were apparent to me in the data under separate subheadings.

Definition of Structures of Students' Understandings

For the purpose of this study, I have defined *structures of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty* as the ways that students framed their comments, explained their point of view, and described their reasons for understanding aspects of their experience in the ways they did. Structures, understood in this way, were also revealing of assumptions that appeared to underlie students' understandings about how the phenomenon of academic honesty and dishonesty "works" in their university. The term structure was not meant to mirror

psychological uses of the term although the student development literature, largely informed by cognitive-structural theorists, was drawn upon for some possible insights in the final chapter of this dissertation. I attempt to employ a more phenomenological approach to the notion of structures, staying as true to the student voice as possible while searching for structural aspects of their understandings.

Without doubt, this search has required me to bring into play my own frameworks, perhaps more than analyses elsewhere in this study has done. Many ways of identifying and describing the structures in use were explored. Students depended on the features of situations to discuss their various views of academic honesty and dishonesty, often posing questions or voicing contingencies based on situational considerations. While this served as a first level or frame, delving further, situational considerations seemed to largely be about how to determine the possible outcomes of certain acts or behaviours related to academic honesty and dishonesty. As was the case with essential elements, not all students described the same factors or forces or ways of thinking about academic honesty and dishonesty. Nonetheless, I have taken meanings of a structural nature that both appeared to resonate with others and the meanings that appeared unique to single students, and have integrated what was voiced. The result of my interpretation and integration is a description of three structures of students' understandings. They are: (1) enticements for academic dishonesty, (2) deterrents to academic dishonesty, and (3) likelihoods of unwanted outcomes from academic dishonesty. These are presented under separate headings in the remainder of this section.

Enticements for Academic Dishonesty

In the context of this study, enticements are students' descriptions of the potential benefits of academic dishonesty that are seen as appealing or tempting in some way. Students' discussion of enticements centred on relief of time pressure, improvement of grades, enhancement of competitive standing, avoidance of irrelevant requirements, and response to unfair practices.

Relief of Time Pressure

Students felt pressed for time. Students in this study said that this pressure stemmed from the realities of a demanding academic workload, from poor time management and procrastination, and from personal circumstances like job responsibilities, family responsibilities, and unexpected personal events. Referring to the potential time saving benefit, several students

described what they considered as questionable "short cuts" that they thought could enter the realm of academic dishonesty. For example, students in the following discussion wondered if, given an extremely tight timeframe, fabricating some aspect of a reference from a resource already returned to the library was academically dishonest:

> N: … So, yeah, I fudged it, and I probably should have been called on that. But, I just couldn't find it. It was due the next day. And it was laziness, completely. I should have taken it [the content requiring citation] out and rewritten it. I know that. But, it was so good how it was.
> K: But, I think a teacher would be more forgiving on that anyway because you're still not saying it was your idea.
> N: Yeah, but you know, it's still inappropriately citing it.
> L: I think we've all done that and it's just lack of organization. You start writing, and you're, "Oh crap. I took the book back and now I didn't write down where I got it from."
> N: And, it was two in the morning because I'm a procrastinator, and I'm [saying] "Oh crap, that's that." (UofA 4, 19)

While the above violation was interpreted to be minor, another student in a different discussion spoke about a more blatant and much more serious form of academic dishonesty chosen at the last minute:

> I: … I've heard people say that "I've put off this paper for so long….Lake Louise just had two feet of snow. It's either, I do the paper this weekend or I spend $30 on the internet and go to Louise to ski--we're going to Louise!" They'll take the mountains every time. And, then, I've heard other people saying that they were struggling in the class, or for whatever reasons. They partied too much or this or that and needed to catch up and they needed to catch up quick. So, most people that I've talked to will look for free papers that they can find on the internet and some will toss down the $20 to $30 every now and again. I don't think it's rampant. (UofS 3,15)

Although appearing somewhat contradictory, I interpret that the above student is indicating that it is common for students to be enticed by the time-saving benefit of academic dishonesty but that he believed buying already completed papers from internet-based paper mills was not a common choice. More commonplace, according to some students' comments was copying parts of a friend's paper, presumably the paper of someone who had taken the class previously, or

written on a related topic. Using or submitting papers written by others was the main focus of these students' comments, from different groups:

> H: You get in a rush. Instead of asking for an extension you start to heavily reference your buddy's paper from last year or you do a search on the internet and find something really obscure that you don't think anybody else will find. (UofS 2,10)
>
> J: Sometimes it's just survival in university…I knew one group, that they handed in someone [else's] essay, and all that group, they had more than a full course load, they were working full-time…everyone else has the same pressures kind of thing, that was just their way to get through it. (UofS 3, 11)

Connected to the emphasis students placed on intent as an essential element of academic dishonesty, students regarded these last minute and intentional acts of academic dishonesty to be far more common than the pre-meditated and more elaborate schemes to be academically dishonest. While time pressures were frequently brought up in discussions, students also acknowledged the option to approach professors and to ask for more time. Matters of fairness and equity related to extensions or what may be seen as professors making special concessions for students is described in more depth in Chapter 6. Regardless of the more honest options available, the potential to save time is an enticement to academic dishonesty according to the students in this study.

Improvement of Grades

Students felt significant pressure regarding grades. One of the University of Alberta focus groups had particularly rich discussion regarding the enticement to improve grades. They speculated that the perceived benefit to cheating is greatest for those who may fail a course and for those who feel pressure to achieve high grades for scholarships or admission to selective programs. Therefore, the mid-range student would seem to have less to gain when it comes to grades but could still be among those who find themselves out of time and needing to catch up quickly even if only to receive an average grade. The marginal student, as pointed out in the following student comment, has the greatest enticement to academic dishonesty since failure is believed likely unless he or she engages in academic dishonesty:

> M: I think it's like [another student] said earlier. I think it's probably the lower end students who are doing it [giving fraudulent reasons for deferring exams]. So, to them they have nothing to lose, they are [thinking] do I do it and I fail or should I take a chance and get [a] better [grade]. (UofA 4, 16)

This student went on to refer to family pressures and financial pressures that can come into play regarding achieving high grades and commented about the pressure some students face to get the grades that allow access to higher status professions like pharmacy, medicine, dentistry, or law to which his peers responded by acknowledging the high stakes facing students:

> M: … You just want to do whatever it takes. And, I know that's wrong. For those people, that one extra percent, especially on, like, an MCAT, that percentile means a whole lot more than just a percentile.
> K: Yeah, but then you lose your whole career if you do it and get caught
> N: Or, you gain your whole career if you don't get caught. (UofA 4, 17)

Following up on the contemplation of one's whole career being won or lost, the first student in the foregoing discussion later said that family pressures on students for grades and access to selective programs and careers could be even more significant:

> M: … It's not just you that did that [failed to get into the program you wanted], you put your whole family down too. So you try to handle it on your own. So, the only way you can get into med school or whatever, it's to copy an assignment. You either copy it or say, "I have morals, I'm not going to do it" and then go home and face the music, right. So, there's things at stake that they have to think about before even making that choice of cheating. (UofA 4, 18-19)

The students in the above discussion appear to understand that the stakes can be very high for some students and in some situations as relates to grades. As a result, the chance to improve a grade through academically dishonest acts was described to be a definite enticement to students.

Enhancement of Competitive Standing

Students are striving to get ahead of one another. Competitions for scarce grades and placements in selective programs were offered as explanations for academic dishonesty in each of the focus groups. Grades are valued by students because they believe they are a means to rank applicants for jobs or to determine entry into selective academic programs. One student expressed this belief in this way "…people [who were] getting better grades from cheating than you did might have a better shot at a job" (D, UofS 1, 15).   Although this builds on the enticement of improved grades described under the previous heading, the notion of competition voiced by students in this study was noteworthy.

Powerfully symbolic of their place as competitors in the university was, for some students in this study, the notion of the "curve." This concept referred to a statistically normal

distribution of grades that resembles a bell-shaped or normal curve. Professors may use it to adjust grades in relationship to each other to ensure that the distribution of grades resembles a statistically normal curve. Inherent in the use of the curve is the placement of students' grades in relation to each other and therefore students in such a situation have a strong sense of being ranked and in competition with one another. Discussion of the effect of the curve occurred in the University of Alberta focus groups where it was reported as a standard practice among professors whereas it was not mentioned in the focus groups held at the University of Saskatchewan. The University of Alberta students appeared to understand use of the curve to mean that there is a fixed number of grades at certain levels available. That is, students believed that the curve may only allow a certain number of A's, B's, C's and "failures" to be assigned and that as a result students are in direct competition with one other for these scarce passing grades. This understanding was apparent in the following comment:

> M: I guess academic honesty is kind of like all athletes take performance enhancing drugs, right? Especially being so competitive—if you're in a class of 200, okay, so you did bad on one exam. It might not hurt the curve as much for you, but you're in a class with 20 some odd and the professor still wants to rank you guys? You're thinking one bad thing that I do will drop me two or three spots and that gets me out of an A or B or whatever, right. (UofA 4,12)

The comparison of academic dishonesty to elite athletics is a powerful metaphor for the level of competition the above student appears to experience. Also symbolic is the student's reference to rampant use of performance enhancing drugs as a form of cheating that is comparable to the phenomenon of academic dishonesty in university.

The climate for competition or collaboration could vary significantly between programs in a single institution according to the students in this study. Responding to one of the scenarios about sabotaging other students' access to books on reserve in the library, several students said they had heard of such behaviours but believed them to occur in programs other than Education. They explained such sabotage as the result of high levels of competition among students. Using Education as a baseline comparator, this student commenting on the prospect of hiding a book so that it is not available to others, explained that there was less at stake for Education students compared to others in terms of grades because it was not a key factor in hiring decisions for teachers:

I: …once we're out [of our Education degree program] our marks aren't a huge determining factor of if and where we find work; whereas for Law, it's—you're ranked in your class and if you're not in the top ten of your class, you're not getting to the prestigious law firms, so there's more competition there to maybe hide [library resources]. (UofS 3, 17)

One student described a scenario in a group project for a business class where the group members had agreed that they had all contributed equally and thus would, in response to the requirement that they provide the professor with peer grades, assign each other the same grade. Reportedly, one student sabotaged that agreement, and the study participant stated that this was due to the curve and the competitive nature of the program of study:

O: …they were all going to get the same [grade] and one member, it only takes one, decided since it's on the curve, he's going to give everybody else 50% and himself a 100…glad I focused on Education. (UofA 5, 7)

The relief of this student that she was not in a competitive program was similar to that of a student in another group. He described his experience with peers in Education as more collaborative than competitive and said he was "horrified" that students in more competitive programs might try to sabotage the work of fellow students (I, UofS 3, 16).

Some students talked about valuing situations that ensure a setting for fair competition. When she responded to the scenario about purposefully keeping a book on two hour reserve, this student (previously quoted for the same comment in Chapter 4) recognized that disadvantaging others can be a form of advantaging oneself, explaining that such an act would be academic dishonesty because of how it compromised fair competition among the students:

N: …definitely, I think that's completely dishonest because its disallowing other people the opportunity to do their best and to be judged comparatively against them, helping yourself. I think that's dishonest. (UofA 4, 3)

Recognizing that when competition is fierce, it is tempting to take an unfair advantage or to align their academic work to the viewpoints of professors regardless of whether students share those views, this student described his commitment to academic honesty, in a context of competition, in this way:

A: I find it really hard to try to compete with those people who have no problem with just using the internet and using what the professor says because I prefer to

do it on my own. I want to know how to do it right. And, then I just struggle with that alter ego that wants to have good marks. (UofS 1, 9)

Fraudulent reasons for deferring exams came up as an example of academic dishonesty in some of the groups. In this statement, a student shares her suspicion that a consistent practice of deferring final exams is what gave another student extra time to prepare for his finals and therefore achieve the standing he needed to get into Medicine:

> N: …I don't know how he managed to do this through all his years of undergrad—he defers almost every single exam. He pretty much blew every Christmas vacation studying. It was worth it to him. Then, also in the summer he couldn't start working but he got into Medicine with top honours in the faculty. How fair is that? (UofA 4, 14)

It is apparent in the students' comments presented in this section that competition exists between students and that they value a fair setting for that competition. While the extent of the competitiveness may vary, the opportunity to enhance competitive standing through acts of academic dishonesty is enticing according to the students in this study.

Avoidance of Irrelevant Content

Students may assess some required content as irrelevant. Students said that when they do not find the material they are being taught to be something personally or professionally worthwhile, they may question as to whether anyone is harmed if they circumvent learning that content through academic dishonesty. A number of students commented about irrelevance of content. For example, this student expressed concern by providing an example of past academic work he described as now serving no purpose:

> G: I'll do this assignment, but I'm never going to look at this again. I've got a stack of English-History stuff a foot tall that I'm never going to read again. Why would I ever need to read an 8-page paper on Charlemagne? No one is ever going to want to read that paper. Why am I doing that? (UofS 2, 25)

Including notions of academic dishonesty, this student used the idea of cheating on irrelevant content as presenting only a benefit and no cost:

> C: …Let's say I have this math test, I copy the answer, if I never have to take a math class again, how did I hurt myself? I got a better mark. That was it. (UofS 1, 24-25).

Then the same student questioned whether students were being graded on aspects of assignments that were relevant, remarking that the kinds of features that result in good grades on lesson plans were not part of the expectation in the teaching world:

> C: …all the bells and whistles, step 1, blah, bah, blah, step 2, step 3, step 4, side notes, and a diagram of what I want it to look like. Are you going to go through all that? When you're lesson planning, you're going to get your objectives down, what you want to do, main ideas, materials you need. …I don't know of anybody out there in the profession that's going to make these unit plans.
> B: Unreal [agreeing]. And, then you have someone who's rewarded for that. They just put a whole bunch of work that I don't need personally.
> C: It's irrelevant 'cause a unit plan doesn't have colored pictures.
> B: For me it's like, I don't have time to do that, and I don't need to do that. I prefer not to do that. But, then this is a big marks thing. (UofS 1, 20)

The discussion above suggests that a relevant assignment is one that mimics the students' sense of practical requirements of the professional setting. Requesting more detail, explanation, or particular kinds of presentation qualifies as irrelevant content and as something that could be avoided or circumvented via academic dishonesty. Seeing one's education as hoops to jump through rather than as contributing to personal development or knowledge in a relevant way can provide the rationale for academic dishonesty as was described by this student:

> I: …This curriculum class that I'm taking is not relevant to my end goal. My effort into this class is lower if I can find ways, or rationalize ways, to get around things. I think that is much more common. I think that's probably rampant, in compared to, people coming straight out with ways of putting notes or cheating on final exams or buying papers off the internet. Things along those lines are probably the rarity. As opposed to it's just trying to rationalize things somehow in your head that "Okay, I've got this assignment from this year, I've got this or that, I can get around this." It's just these are hoops to jump through, so then, [that is] almost rationalizing in itself. (UofS 3, 12)

Apparent in the student comments discussed under this heading is a view that the content they learn and the ways they are asked to demonstrate what has been learned ought to mimic the real-world setting as they believe it to be. If content, or if a task or assignment, does not appear pertinent to their future role it is enticing to circumvent or avoid the work via acts of academic dishonesty. One student said that, when this is the case, professors need to explain the learning objectives more clearly:

B: Often it comes down to [professors'] expectations, too. A professor may say, okay, you need to develop this unit plan because we need you to figure out what it's like to do a unit plan and have this resource…I think it's very much a lesson in writing a unit plan—writing a 30 or 40 page unit plan and seeing what that feels like. That's what they are getting you to do. That's the experience they want you to pull… (UofS 1, 19)

Student comments about irrelevancy of content as an enticement for academic dishonesty also points to students' focus on professional preparation for employment as teachers.

Response to Unfair Practices

Students experienced practices they regarded as unfair. Several students expressed frustration about their learning environment and the unfair practices that they observed. Students talked about feeling that if they were being treated unfairly or in an uncaring manner that this caused them to feel disillusioned with the learning process and to care less about what they were learning and to feel more inclined to take shortcuts or to be academically dishonest. One student said that when assignments are unreasonable and "expectations are way, way off" that it "leads people to do certain things that they may not have done before" (UofS 1, 4B). He went on to say that some professors take a rather authoritarian view that "I'm the professor, and you're the 300 students, you do what you're asked and that's that." As the discussion continued, this same student posed this question to one of the group members who had said that she had a deep personal commitment to honesty and, therefore, academic honesty as well:

B: What about if you disagree with the way a class is being run or the way a degree is being run?
E: Uh huh?
B: What if you're paying $5,000 for a bunch of classes that don't make sense to you or you think are there just for the sake of being there? Would that affect how honest you are or does it affect it at all? Or, that's irrelevant?
E: I see what you mean, say if a professor's slacking and doesn't have high expectations of you, well how can you keep that train of honesty going? Is that what you mean?
B: Like if you have a prof who rather than mark papers, obviously came up with marks out of I don't know where…How does that encourage you to be honest about what you're doing? In some cases, it's a matter of jumping through the hoops. That's why I said professors at this university have an active role in making sure that we are honest. I don't think you'd ever be dishonest to a

professor that you respected or in a class or college that you thought was worthwhile. I'm just curious if that would change your angle on that?

E: I don't know. Probably would actually. (UofS 1, 5-6)

The rationalization for academic dishonesty, described above, was echoed by two other students from two other groups who expressed a similar view that academic dishonesty could be a justifiable response to professors' lack of effort or diligence:

H: They [professors] haven't bothered [to make assignments unique], why should you [be concerned with making them original]? (UofS 2, 19)

J: If the prof isn't paying enough attention to pick it [academic dishonesty] up, then obviously he doesn't really care if there is cheating or not because it was pretty blatant that they were cheating [in an exam situation] and the prof was never in the room to look at it. (UofS 3, 4)

These comments indicate that some students may find it enticing to respond to situations that they perceive to be unfair or to professors that they perceive to be negligent by engaging in academic dishonesty. A heavy reliance on professors to set and enforce the rules of academic honesty and dishonesty was discussed in Chapter Four and is also discussed in more depth in Chapter Six.

The following discussion incorporates a number of enticements to academic dishonesty, but was unique in that students' comments about unfairness included concerns beyond the classroom and were about institution-wide administrative practices like tuition setting, book pricing, professors' teaching qualifications:

Q: …Tuition goes up every year and I feel like I'm being cheated almost every day, paying prices for text books and thinking "okay, that's the price" and then going to Chapters and they are half the price; teachers that tell you one thing and do another; grading on the curve. I feel there's a lot of dishonesty just in the administration of the university itself. A lot of times, I know it's not right, but I can justify "oh, I really don't have time this week, I have so many classes, I have this paper". Instead of honour you, I'm just going to take a little paraphrase and maybe not reference. I don't have time. I don't feel like I owe them that. When you get right down to it, the moral standing, no I don't think it [academic dishonesty] is right.

O: You have to do it sometimes.

Q: I don't feel like I owe you anything. You're taking from me, I will take from you.

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P: Not only that, just along with what you said, most of the other instructors that are indifferent. I don't know about the Education classes, but in other classes, they're not [trained] teachers. They're just professionals in their field and they don't know how to communicate with somebody else about what they know. They'd rather be doing research in their field rather than teaching a bunch of kids. I don't know if that's very honest in an academic university like this to stick people [like this] in this class and you're supposed to learn?

Q: And we're paying for that faulty education… (UofA 5, 4-5)

With some strong feelings voiced in the preceding discussion, of note is the student identified as "Q" referring to owing or honouring someone or some entity referred to as "you" with academic honesty. It is not clear whether she is referring to the author of a work she is copying or failing to appropriately cite, an unengaged or unfair professor, or an institution that is cheating her in some way. Regardless, apparent in this excerpt is a sense that there ought to be a fair exchange of various types between students and others in the university. I infer that being dishonest in a context students believe is already unfair in some way is enticing as a form of retaliation or retribution that has the potential to be inherently satisfying in itself.

Deterrents to Academic Dishonesty

In the context of this study, I define deterrents as the outcomes of academic dishonesty that students said they wanted to avoid. These outcomes are deterring in their effect because of the potential harm or damage they do to students themselves. Students discussed the desire to avoid penalties for academic dishonesty, the desire to avoid incompetence as a professional, and the desire to avoid suffering the personal cost of compromising personal integrity.

Application of Penalties

Students did not want to receive the penalties for academic dishonesty. They expected that penalties for academic dishonesty were fairly severe and some expected that students could be expelled from their university for relatively small infractions or first time offenses. For example, this student, in reacting to a scenario about exam cheating and failing to reference appropriately, said: "Yeah, [that one] and the reference one, those are ones right away that I think of getting kicked out of school…" (K, UofA 4, 8). Another student in that same group reflected on being part of a small class in which most of the students had failed to reference appropriately. He said that his professor had said "if I was going through what I'm supposed to do [in response to plagiarism] I would have been calling the university [administration]" and the student went on to say "and we would have been kicked out of school" (L, UofA 4, 8). Another

student, talking about feeling exhausted and disillusioned in his last term of studies, said that instead of running "the risk of being booted at this stage for being dishonest" that he was going to "go through the motions" (G, UofS 2, 23) so that he could complete his requirements. The same student, talking about using one's own paper twice, something that he thought should be allowed, said "At this point, I'm not willing to do it. What, throw away four years of university if you get caught?" (G, UofS 2, 3). A student in another group, speaking to the effect her sense of the potential for punishment, said "I was just scared crapless to cheat" (J, UofS 3, 12). From these examples of students' comments, it is clear that students perceive the penalties for academic dishonesty to be severe and to very likely include expulsion. They did not question the appropriateness of the application of such severe penalties but accepted that these were the likely consequences and therefore deterring of academic dishonesty.

Students learned of penalties through the student grapevine or hearsay more generally. Sometimes they said they knew the person involved, as described by these students from different groups:

> E: I know this guy who tried to pass off his whole unit plan as his own and they caught him. [It was] during our internship and he was chucked out. (UofS 1,14)
> O: …You hear from other students too, like, or professors sometimes tell you worst case scenarios that have happened to them in the past… (UofA 5,9)

In another student story, a professor alerted students to an incident in their own class:

> O: In one of my classes there was a student that, um bought their paper, I don't know where, I wouldn't even know where to find this stuff
> P: Where do they find these papers?
> O: Yeah, he bought his paper and got caught.
> SLB: Do you know what happened?
> O: I'm pretty sure he was expelled and it was no questions asked. Out. Done.
> SLB: And how did you find out that that happened?
> O: Our teacher told us, she didn't say the student's name or anything. She just, as kind of a warning, this is the circumstance and this is what happened. Didn't use any names and it was a class of 200 people so, you couldn't tell that there was one person missing… (UofA 5, 11).

While the above excerpts from students' conversations suggest that students are unaware that a progressive model of discipline may be employed in cases where students are academically

dishonest, this student thought that there probably were progressive penalties, and wondered whether her friend, whom she believed had been expelled, was being truthful about her situation:

> L: …I actually only found out about it about a year ago since I just thought she dropped out. She never told anyone. But, yeah, I never really got into details with her but she maintains it was strictly a case of mis-sourcing, that she hadn't sourced correctly. From what I've heard around the campus and from other people who have had issues with that, it seems that profs or admin normally says: "Okay, this is an obvious mistake, redo it, write lines on the board," something. But, so I'm thinking it was obviously a lot more blatant than that. So yeah, she's waitressing… (UofA 4, 16)

Students' knowledge of penalties and processes associated with being penalized for academic dishonesty is varied and seemingly based on hearsay. In general, the students in this study indicated a belief that the penalties can be very serious and detrimental to students' futures if they are caught being academically dishonest and as a result students find this a deterrent to academic dishonesty.

Future Incompetence as a Teacher

Students do not want to become incompetent teachers. They want to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to become competent professionals. Students voiced an expectation that what they were being required to do as part of their education would be beneficial to them in their "real life" (D, UofS 1, 25). Of note across the focus group data were comments suggesting that those that cheated would not learn the requisite skills or knowledge. The following is an example of such a comment:

> N: I think we're all in Education. So, if the institution is letting through people who are academically dishonest, we're going on to teach elementary, junior, high school…we're supposed to be preparing these students to become academically honest. (UofA 4, 24)

Students believed academically dishonest students would be disadvantaged at some point in the future, even if it was not while attending university. The following comments from students in a variety of focus groups provide examples of this type of dire prediction. Below are two examples:

> D: it's going to catch up to them, it will sting them for sure…I think it always catches up… (UofS 1, 27)

Q: If a friend wants to cheat and go through life cheating then that's their prerogative, it's probably going to come back to bite them eventually. (UofA 5, 15)

Taking a pragmatic view, these students in two different discussions believed if students did not learn the requisite material in university, it was inevitable that they would have to do so later in life:

Q: If she wants to cheat, it's up to her, and she'll bear the results whether or not it's immediate like the test or later on in life (UofA 5, 1)
L: I try not to think about that kind of stuff [academic dishonesty] these days. It's not worth it. For me, it's about focusing on my own learning and my own growth. I know of people who are dishonest. Well, they are the ones that aren't learning in this institution. And, university doesn't go on forever. They are going to have to do it someday and fend for themselves… (UofA 4, 23-24)

In the final sentence of the above statement, the student projects that behaviour during university suggests behaviour in the work place and that failure to learn the given material and skills while in university, does not bode well for the future of students who are academically dishonest. One student in the same group relayed a story about someone with a law degree that she knew of that had been disbarred for forging a judge's signature and she speculated as to whether he had also been academically dishonest during university and been desensitized to the risks (K, UofA 4, 21).

Becoming a competent teacher appeared to be of importance to the students in this study as was made apparent by their concerns that academic dishonesty could cause them to fail to learn skills or knowledge important to teaching. The desire to avoid this outcome of academic dishonesty served as a deterrent.

Compromise of Personal Integrity

Students talked about the personal cost they would experience if they did not accomplish academic tasks honestly. Several students in this study referred to their own intrinsic need to be honest. While most student comments in this regard are phrased in terms of motivations to maintain integrity, I have interpreted students' meanings to include that they are therefore also deterred from academic dishonesty because they want to avoid compromising their personal integrity. For this student, maintaining personal integrity through academic honesty was about a responsibility to himself to learn all that he could:

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B: I'm here to develop academically so I need to be true to myself and if I'm just going to throw in a bunch of assignments that I didn't really do, did I really get anything out of this class, did I do myself right by doing that? (UofS 1, 5)

For two others academic honesty meant, knowing that they could do the work themselves and for student "O" below, it also meant knowing the grade received was earned:

J: …I wanted to know that I could get through university on my own means and having to study, having to do my own assignments, I'll work and collaborate with friends, but I didn't want to cheat… I wanted to see if I could do it myself. (UofS 3, 11-12)

O: I think academic honesty is just doing the best that you can and no matter what the real consequences may be. Just keep your work your own. Just be as truthful as you can. We all tell little white lies but just be as honest as you can and keep your work your own. You know, if your work isn't as good as this person's is that doesn't mean you have to copy theirs. You stick with your own work and the mark that you get is the mark that you get. You should just always be honest about your sources… (UofA 5, 4)

The next two student comments focused on maintaining personal integrity by behaving consistently across contexts:

F: …I think I do have my own philosophy of education and that's not just in the schools [K to 12], that's in university too. That I have my own philosophy about what my college should be about. And, with that whole value system, that ties to how I act. I can't control how somebody else acts. I can't control those people [who are possibly cheating]…But, I can control what I do and I control how I do it. And, for me, it's pretty clear what I have to do. (UofS 1, 28)

E: …Honesty is honesty. You live by it through your values and morals and of course you would follow it throughout anything, even academic, everything you do. I personally wouldn't feel good breaking what I've always been taught throughout my life. (UofS 1, 5)

This student describes academic dishonesty as a moral concern beyond the particular rules in a given context and the feelings that would result for her from academic dishonesty that she wanted to avoid:

A: I think it also has to do with our own morals and stuff, whether or not following the rules, how it makes you feel. It's almost like when you become dishonest, you get this guilty nagging feeling in the back, that you know something's wrong. So there's that moral focus. (UofS 1, 5)

Each of the above excerpts suggest, to varying degrees, that students in this study saw their personal behaviour and achievement in terms of authentically gaining the knowledge or skills they seek from their education, testing their own capacity to learn, and being in integrity with themselves regardless of the context. Several students also described a concern for compromise of professional integrity as educators:

> A: When you get into Education, when you get here, the College of Education, you've already spent some time in different areas or you've spent some time out of school once you're a mature student and you just know things. When you get here, you already have a conscience. That's what dictates whether or not you're academically honest or dishonest. I think most of the time, you'll find those people, in this type of professional college—you're supposed to be a role model to younger people… (UofS 1, 28)
>
> Q: …I think I'd be really surprised if an Education student cheated on a test, from what I know about them….going into an Educational setting, I would be really surprised…we're in Education and learning is valuable (UofA 5, 8)
>
> C: ...I think that as a professional. Throughout elementary we were raised not to cheat, right? You can't cheat, it's bad. As a professional who wants to teach other children, won't you feel consciously bad knowing that you screwed yourself? You know? And now you're trying to dictate to these little kids not to cheat, and honestly, deep down inside you feel bad. (UofS 1, 27)

These excerpts suggest that the students believe Education students are more committed than other students in the university to maintaining academic integrity because of the greater value they place on learning and their future as role models and teachers. Knowing that they could, in integrity, put themselves forward to their students as academically honest was important to these future teachers and therefore being unable to do so because of a history of academic dishonesty was something to be avoided and therefore a deterrent.

Likelihoods of Unwanted Outcomes of Academic Dishonesty

In the context of this study, I define likelihoods of unwanted outcomes of academic dishonesty to be students' beliefs about the probability that acts of academic dishonesty will be detected and punished in various situations. Students saw class size, faculty-student familiarity, nature of assignments, and professor diligence as impacting the likelihoods that students would be detected and/or punished for academic dishonesty. Each is discussed below under separate sub headings.

Class Size

Students said it was both unlikely and unrealistic for professors to be diligent about academic dishonesty when they teach large classes.   In one group, a student remarked about the exam setting in large classes and questioned how a professor could ever monitor a large group of students:

> F: …How do you sit up at the front looking at 260 students making sure academic dishonesty doesn't happen? (UofS 1, 12)

She went on to wonder aloud how a professor could ever follow up on suspicions of academic dishonesty in such a situation and said she believed class size explains why she had once observed a professor do nothing about blatant cheating during a midterm exam. Expressing the view that if the class was too big, when faced with a suspicion of academic dishonesty, a professor would not be reasonably expected to follow up:

> H: …[a professor's diligence] would depend on the size of class and the personality of the professor. If you've got 150 students in your class and you know you've read it somewhere before and you've still got 140 papers to mark, I'd just give them a low mark and say that's more than you deserve, but I'm not going to spend the time. That's what I would expect from a prof. (UofS 2, 13)

Another student stated the relationship between class size and unwanted outcomes of academic dishonesty this way, noting that a reduced likelihood of detection also makes it enticing to cheat:

> C: As the size of your class increases, in Arts and Science, and stuff your academic dishonesty increases….during tests, one thing I've noticed, all of a sudden the test in physiology comes around in a huge theatre, all the boys are wearing hats, you can't see where their eyes are. As the size increases, you're temptation goes up a bit more…(UofS 1,23)

In each of the focus groups, comments were made that students believed that the larger the class size the less likely a professor would detect or punish academic dishonesty. This appeared to be a likelihood that students in all the groups found self-evident as it was met with both verbal and non-verbal indications of agreement.

Faculty-student Familiarity

Related to matters of class size, but not exclusively, students cited the importance of faculty-student familiarity to the likelihood that academic dishonesty will be detected. That is, if professors know their students, not only to see them, but also know their work or their interests,

they are more likely to detect work that is not authentic. This student described the role of familiarity as affecting the likelihood of detection and subsequent follow up in this way:

> H: In a small section, where [the professor is] more involved with the [students], it becomes more personal, then I would expect some action [in response to suspicions of academic dishonesty]. But in a big class where it's impersonal, I wouldn't expect the prof to do very much. (UofS 2, 13)

This student reflected on how easy it would have been to cheat in an on-line class in which he had no personal contact with the professor. He speculated that students do in fact cheat in this class because the anonymity makes it easy to do so:

> M: …So, what's stopping me from, let's say, if I'm really strapped for time, I can just pay someone to do this. Forward my e-mail to whoever is doing the thing so they get direct feedback or whatever. This person on WebCT doesn't even have to see me, they can just be doing this for me. No one is there to hold you accountable if you want to cheat. So, I'm very sure in that class the marks are so high because at least 10 or 20 percent probably got a lot of help from another person….you could cheat all you want, because no one could catch you because they don't know who you are. Right? (UofA 4, 9)

Students appear to believe that being unknown to professors decreases the likelihood of getting caught in academic dishonesty.

Nature of Assignments

Some types of assignments make it more or less difficult to detect academic dishonesty. For example, students believe that copying is difficult to detect for assignments that, when done correctly, should look similar. Several students said the nature of the assignments can be tied to the disciplinary area of study and therefore it is harder to detect cheating in some disciplines than others. For assignments that require subjectivity and interpretation, students said that each assignment then should reflect individuality and thus if one resembled another, academic dishonesty would be more easily detected. And, vice versa, for an assignment that has the potential for objectively correct answers, it is more difficult to detect copying or plagiarism or unpermitted collaboration. This student made a remark along these lines when he talked about assignments in computing:

> M: …the whole point is everybody is working toward sort of one assignment in the end. You should all get the same output for things. So, there's got to be a lot

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of similarities between two assignments, or everyone's assignment, so you can probably tell a lot of people work together. (UofA 4, 20)

If it would be "easy" to do an assignment dishonestly and not be detected, this was another consideration according to students in this study. For example, when considering the scenario of fabricating an interview with a teacher, it was acknowledged as easy to do in part because "who's going to go back to check your interview" (H, UofS 2, 3)? Other examples given by students were book reviews (C, UofS 1, 7) papers and web sites on long established topics (H, UofS 2, 14), repetitive assignments asking students to reflect on their own philosophy of teaching (B, UofS 1, 8) or reflections on their own teaching practicum experiences (G, UofS 2, 19).

Students recognized that the nature of assessment itself differed between programs and that this had an impact on matters of academic honesty and dishonesty. Both of these students' contrasted the nature of the assessment between sciences and humanities and suggested the difference presented a different context for academic dishonesty among the disciplines:

> B: …As an example, getting 90s or 100s in Chemistry, it isn't easy, but it's, there's a formula to get there. To try to get 100% on an English paper? Would you ever? Will it ever happen?...I would doubt it. Because, it's just how can you have a perfect paper? (UofS 1, 22)
>
> M: …then how do you make the distinction between math and English now. With math, you ask someone to check over your homework, they get that one mistake, you're whole answer is now changed. So, of course you're going to change it. You're asking someone to look over something for you and you're both submitting it, but it's okay in English but not okay in math. (UofA 4, 5)

Related to questions of professor's diligence in detecting or following up on academic dishonesty was the use of internet-based detection tools. Students in this study appeared to recognize that the vast amount information available through the internet had made it easier to cut-and-paste content from web-based resources and that students could present such information as their own rather than provide the reference. At the same time, they also recognized that technology made it much easier to search out questionable sections or entire documents when plagiarism is suspected. A sample of student comments of this type follows:

> Q: It [a plagiarism detection program or service] matches anything on the internet, anyway. It will highlight anything. That was one instance that I really

had a teacher that [followed up but mostly] I don't think they do it. If something's obvious to them, obviously they are all really well-versed in their curriculum and their text book, then they are going to recognize if you've used a couple of paragraphs. (UofA 5, 12-13)

H: …I mean how long have we been studying Shakespeare for, how many famous essays can you find on the internet? How many famous reviews? How many not-so-famous ones could you find in a search? It would take you five seconds to do it. … it's just so much easier and faster and the rest of it. So, I think it's [plagiarism] a lot bigger problem now than it used to be (UofS 2, 14)

In the following comment, the student is suggesting that programs were available to detect how closely matched assignments in his computer science class were and that this could be used to identify copying:

M: But when I took computing classes, like programming classes, they actually have programs where they run it and if your program ran the same way as another then they will talk to you about it and then you could be in trouble. But, then, there are still ways to go about it. You can just rearrange some of the things and make it really similar but different...so you can probably tell a lot of people work together but they don't do a lot about it except the blatant ones who are actually copying. (UofA 4, 20)

The more objective the content of an assignment is, the less likely copying will be detected compared to more subjective content where assignments ought to appear more individual and unique.

Professor Diligence

Students in this study perceived that the more diligent a professor appeared to be about matters of academic dishonesty, the more likely that the professor would in fact detect and follow up in some way. The role of professors in the phenomenon of academic honesty and dishonesty arose in several ways in all of the discussions among students in this study. As discussed in Chapter Four, professors' roles in the setting of the rules was an important feature to students in this study who said rules about academic dishonesty must exist and be intentionally broken in order to say that academic dishonesty has occurred. Students discussed both individual and disciplinary-based differences that they had observed in terms of professors' diligence regarding academic dishonesty.

Individual differences. Professors differed in their apparent individual commitments to maintaining academic honesty, according to students. The more committed professors appeared, the more likely students perceived it to be that they would detect and punish academic dishonesty. Students appeared to be searching for explicit or implicit information about their professors' commitment to maintaining academic integrity. When a professor did not appear committed to attending to matters of academic dishonesty one student said it negatively affected her own commitment to academic honesty (E, UofS 1, 6) and another student interpreted a failure to adequately monitor an exam setting as a possible lack of caring about issues of academic dishonesty on the part of the professor (J, UofS 3, 4). These students interpreted that a lack of follow up could mean that the violation was minor if it was not significant enough for the professor to respond:

> M: I also think [cheating is] laziness, but then the reason why we're lazy and don't fix things is probably because… you don't think the professor is going to do anything about it
> N: Or, it's not that big a deal
> K: That's true. (UofA 4, 20)

Similarly, these students also thought individual professors could either regard infractions as minor or choose to ignore them:

> O: [depends] how big the plagiarism of whatever it is, is. If you happened to have missed or mis-referenced something, maybe once in your paper, they'll probably let that go because at least it shows that you're making the effort. But, if you put in two whole paragraphs straight off the internet, they might [follow up] so I think it all depends on the professor and the circumstance.
> P: I know a lot of them let it go. (UofA 5, 13)

Another rather curious interpretation of an apparent lack of diligence regarding academic dishonesty on the part of professors by one student was the need to maintain positive student reviews:

> A: ….They have a reputation to uphold to try and be a certain way. So, they let people slide through. (UofS 1, 13).

In contrast to students' perceptions about individual professors who do not attend to or respond to concerns for academic dishonesty, students spoke of professors who appear highly committed to maintaining academic honesty. When professors gave stern warnings and said they

were committed to following up on suspicions of academic dishonesty, this student said it caused some students to feel overly concerned about things like inadvertent plagiarism:

> Q: Yeah, generally, I have a few [friends] that are just so stringent about papers and they are just terrified that they are going to get caught for something, which is why they study so much, and,…they just will comb over their papers, like ten times. They'll be reviewing it and "like, okay, did I make sure I referenced" and I don't think you need to do that or worry about it. But they are so paranoid or worried that the professor's going to catch them. I'm like, they don't have that much time to go on websites to see if you plagiarized, they've got 200 students in the class… (UofA 5, 9)

Describing her own stress, this student said a professor known to dedicate great amounts of time to checking references was thought of as unusual and as lacking in either other work or outside interests and went on to say:

> D: …if she sees any discrepancies, you lose marks. As well as she might perceive intentional plagiarism, she'll pursue that. When I was handing my paper in, I was trembling (UofS 1, 18)

Another student in the same group described differences between one professor's diligence and that of another:

> F: And, it depends on the prof. I had one prof with Art History, she was just insane [about] watching us. Nobody could wear hats. [If your gaze strayed] she'd take your paper away…you couldn't even stretch…it was really just amazing. Whereas, we have another prof who has been teaching here quite a few years that really couldn't control the amount of cheating going on. (UofS 1, 23)

Just as has been identified earlier in this dissertation, it appears students search their professors' words and deeds for messages about how to conduct themselves as students related to matters of academic honesty and dishonesty.

Disciplinary differences. Students indicated that they know that professors differ from each other as individuals but also that professors differ in their approach by discipline or field of study. There are different norms in different degree programs according to the students for how explicit professors are about academic honesty and dishonesty and about other rules as well. All of the students had taken courses from outside the College/Faculty of Education and could comment on experiences in other disciplines. All but one student had studied in a degree program other than Education prior to becoming an Education student. There were several

comments contrasting the climate for academic honesty and dishonesty in different disciplines in ways that suggested it was based on perceptions about professors' practices. This student explained the difference she was experiencing in Education compared to her previous area of study in this way:

> G: Once you're in the College of Education, you got here for a reason. You're smart enough. You're focused enough. [Professors] don't have to reiterate the policy is what I find. It was always getting drilled into me the first three years and as soon as I got here [education] it's hasn't. (UofS 2, 13-14)

This student went on to compare this experience with his experience in Arts and Science:

> G: …Arts and Science, like, the first day of class that's what they went over in every single class: academic honesty, what is plagiarism, how to properly cite, and they really stress "do not do it". I think Arts and Science professors, maybe because they are dealing…sometimes with students who shouldn't even be in university, first or second year students who aren't as experienced, don't know what the expectations are, maybe they stress it a little bit more…(UofS 2, 14)

Also comparing previous experience to the experience in Education, this student expressed notable differences:

> E: I'm an English minor, so everything that we wrote, they always said the same thing, "we're going to check it out." You know that feeling that it's got to be legit. So, I always had that at the back of my mind when I did my assignments. I felt like, there's no room here to, to try and do anything… (UofS 1,9)

Again, comparing different approaches of professors from different fields, these three students from different groups commented that unlike professors' practices they had experienced previously, Education professors provided few boundaries in terms of academic dishonesty in which students were to work:

> A: …a lot of the professors, they don't set out the boundaries like at the beginning of the year. In my science degree, right away they said, "This paper is due on this date. If you are late, one day 2%, two days 4%, late 3 days, and so on and so forth, until I get the paper." So, regardless of how your mark is for that paper, you're going to get a reduced mark. It's like you come into this college and there are no boundaries set for when something is due, whether you're going to get docked marks or anything of that nature. (UofS 1, 16)
> H: You could always just go ask for an extension…it doesn't seem to matter what the excuse is in this college, if you need another few weeks, go ahead.

Which drives me crazy because that's one thing you may do for your students out in the school, but if you come to the principal and say I haven't got my report cards done, can I just do all them in a week…(UofS 2, 20)

A: …in my first degree there were like, "we're going to check everything that you do and it has to be researched, it has to be cited, it has to be everything". So, I find that, where I stand is, it depends on which program you're in, you're being considered academically dishonesty or being honest. (UofS 1, 9)

Students comments not only suggest a difference in the appearance of professor diligence in different disciplines, they also appear to note a common experience that they perceive there to be less concern for and attention paid to academic dishonesty in their education programs.

Discussion of Structures Apparent in Students' Understandings of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

Apparent within what was voiced by students was an importance placed on knowing the specific features of a situation where academic honesty and dishonesty were in question. These features appeared to allow students to assess the possible outcomes of academic honesty and dishonesty. Students were able to contemplate possible outcomes using structures that I have named enticements for academic dishonesty, deterrents to academic dishonesty, and likelihoods of unwanted outcomes from academic dishonesty. Here, I summarize the findings and then discuss the findings in terms of a framework for situational risk analysis.

Enticements were what students identified as potential benefits of academic dishonesty in a given situation. Among them was the potential for academic dishonesty to relieve time pressures that can be brought on by external circumstances or personal shortcomings. The potential to improve grades, marginal or not, through academic dishonesty was another enticement. An enticement appearing to have particular power was the potential to improve competitive academic standing through academic dishonesty. Students also described academic dishonesty as an enticing way to circumvent irrelevant content or requirements or as an enticing response to professor practices they thought were unfair or simply lacking in concern for academic integrity overall.

Deterrents were what students said caused them to want to avoid academic dishonesty. Students' descriptions suggested that students understand there to be externally and internally imposed costs to academic dishonesty. A strong deterrent external to the student were the penalties that students believed could be severe and applied at the discretion of professors.

Internal to the student was the desire to maintain personal integrity. Students framed this as something valuable that they did not wish to lose and the potential loss was therefore a deterrent for academic dishonesty. Having both external and internal repercussions, was students' wish to become competent professionals. A fear of failing to learn what was required of them by being academically dishonest also had a deterring effect, according to students.

Likelihoods of unwanted outcomes were found in students' statements about the probabilities of detection and punishment in given situations. These are summarized below as four relationships that structure to some degree students' understandings of academic and dishonesty:

1. The fewer students there are in a class, the greater the likelihood that professors will follow up on suspicions of academic dishonesty;

2. The greater the familiarity of professors with their students and their work, the greater the likelihood that academic dishonesty will be detected;

3. The greater the variation that is expected by professors in the content of assignments, the greater the likelihood that academic dishonesty will be detected; and

4. The stronger an individual professor's claim of diligence regarding academic dishonesty, the greater the likelihood that the professor will follow up on a suspicion of academic dishonesty.

In summary, students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty appear to be structured in a way that allows them to contemplate the enticements to academic dishonesty, deterrents from academic dishonesty, and likelihoods of unwanted outcomes from academic dishonesty.

A Framework for Situational Risk Analyses in
Students' Understandings of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

Uncertainty seems to lie at the heart of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty. This was brought to light in Chapter 4 with students' self-described confusion about whether some acts qualify as academic honesty or dishonesty and is further amplified in the current chapter where the structures described are all based on the uncertain potential of academic honesty and dishonesty experienced by students. Students identified a wide range of variables that appeared to influence their understandings and actions in relation to academic honesty and dishonesty. My categorization of these into enticements, deterrents, and likelihoods

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can be extrapolated with some ease to form a framework for situational risk analyses in students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty.

Students in this study appeared to be familiar with and conversant in assessing the risks associated with academic honesty and academic dishonesty. Other researchers have also found that students analyze whether or not academic dishonesty is a worthwhile risk as was noted in Chapter 2 (e.g., Ashworth et al, 1997; Park 2003, Payne & Nantz, 1994; Michaels & Miethe, 1989). While few of the students in this study were explicit about the combining of the three structures of enticements, deterrents, and likelihoods of unwanted outcomes into a framework for situational risk analysis per se, it appeared that these three structures do serve students in such a way. As depicted in Figure 5.1, students weigh the potential benefits of academic dishonesty (enticements) with the potential costs (deterrents) and consider the probability of detection and punishment (likelihood of unwanted outcomes) and use this as a framework to analyze the situational risk and ultimately determine how to act or what to believe in relation to academic honesty and dishonesty.
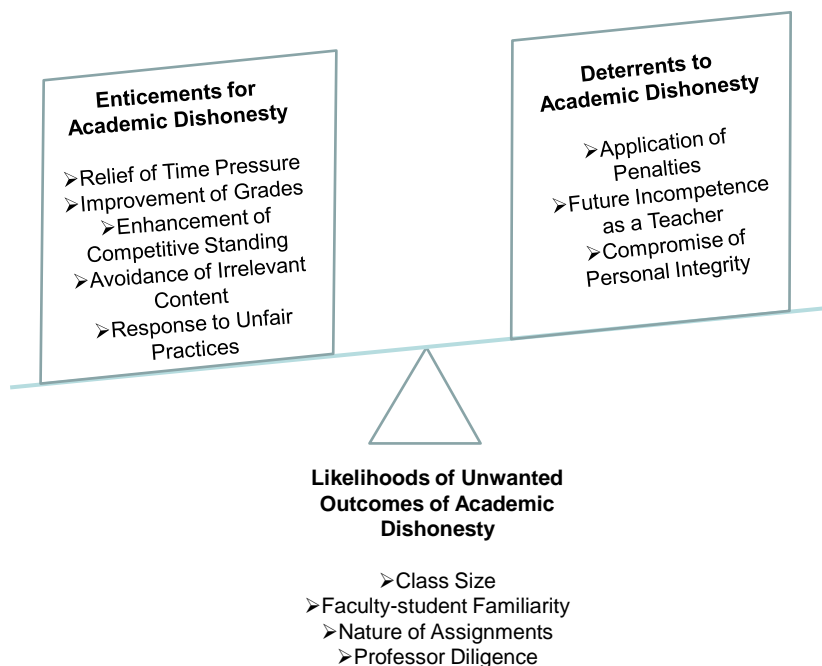
Figure 5.1 Situational Risk Assessment in Students' Understandings of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

Students pointed out that the relative importance of the enticements and deterrents to academic dishonesty varies by the individual student and, for the likelihoods, by individual contexts or characteristics or approaches of professors. Since pressures differ among students, so do their assessments as to whether the risks of academic dishonesty are worth taking. For example, students in this study said that grade-related pressures can vary by career goals. Students aiming for highly selective programs will be under more grade pressure than those pursuing less competitive programs. Likewise, students' values differ. For some maintaining their personal integrity is of utmost importance while for others saving time or responding in-kind to unfair practices would be more appealing.

The calculation of risk aligns with Woessner's (2004) analysis of plagiarism as a gamble some students are willing to take. He proposed that when students' senses of the costs of cheating are insufficient to outweigh the perceived benefits the result is that they perceive cheating to be an "excellent gamble" (p. 313). He asserted that virtually all students know that if academic dishonesty is detected there will be likely consequences and as a result weigh the potential benefits of cheating with the risks of being caught. Citing rational choice or expected utility methodologies, Woessner suggested a structure for decision-making that is particularly sensitive to risk and uncertainty. He expressed this in a way that appears consistent with how students in this study discussed the situational considerations that influence their understanding of academic honesty and dishonesty:

> Indeed, uncertainty is a particularly important component of the decision to commit plagiarism because students cannot possibly know for certain whether their efforts will be successful. It is the process of risk assessment that, weighed against the potential costs and benefits of the action which, drawing from economic theory, motivates students to either engage in plagiarism or complete the work on their own. In order to construct a rational choice theory of plagiarism, it is essential to incorporate elements of perceived risk, known costs, and prospective benefits into an intuitive model of decision making. (p. 314)

Upon developing the logic for the expected value of plagiarism and the potential penalties, Woessner concluded that risk assessment models were useful in comparing what I have called enticements and deterrents to academic dishonesty. However, he asserted that common sense was needed to determine the seriousness of cases of academic dishonesty. Subjective judgment would still be required as long as matters of degree are acknowledged to exist. Woessner's final

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comments addressed a belief that the students in this study had also brought to light, that if professors perceive the penalty to not suit the crime—or act of academic dishonesty—they may not apply a strict punishment meaning the seriousness of misconduct remains a matter of discretion. Discretion to respond in an educative or punitive manner to academic dishonesty was noted to some degree as among the individual differences in professor diligence that students observed. However, this notion of discretion was applied by the students in this study more so as an expectation they had of themselves as future teachers, although professors who take an educative rather than punitive approach were appreciated by students.

Many of the findings described in this chapter align closely with findings of other researchers interested in the reasons that students give for academically dishonest behaviours. (For a comprehensive review see Whitley & Keith-Spiegel's (2002, pp. 23-24) summary of the reasons and justifications students give for academic dishonesty.) The present analysis, however, differs from findings that largely have resulted in lists of reasons or explanations students give for academic dishonesty. I suggest many of the student explanations for academic dishonesty found in previous research could also be understood as structures for understanding. While in isolation, any single enticement, deterrent, or likelihood identified by students in this study may present a motive for academic honesty or dishonesty, taking them together as structures of understanding is particularly informative about how they see their learning environment and their place within it. The findings reported on here suggest that students see academic honesty and dishonesty as a multi-faceted phenomenon and that their understandings are based on the combination or relative weight of the enticements, deterrents, and likelihoods perceived to exist in a given situation and not on one single variable. However, one single variable, like achieving competitive academic standing, could outweigh all other considerations and for some students make academic dishonesty worth the risk. Perhaps enticements, deterrents, and likelihoods also structure students' understandings of severity of academic dishonesty. That is, acts that appear to be low risk may also be understood by students as less severe and less severe may align with less "wrong." Students' sense of the morality of academic honesty and dishonesty is explored the final chapter.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, described were findings that addressed the second research question: *How do senior Education students structure their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty?* Students offered a multitude of comments about the role of situational considerations in their understandings. Delving into students focus on situational considerations and the potential of various outcomes, three structures of students understanding were discovered: enticements to academic dishonesty, deterrents from academic dishonesty, and likelihoods of unwanted outcomes of academic dishonesty as shown in Figure 5.2
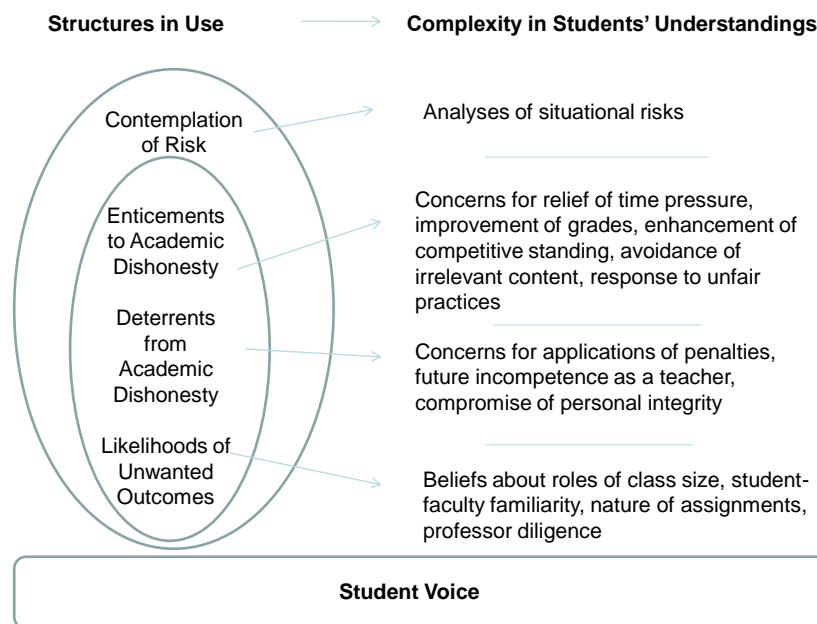
Figure 5.2 Structures in use and Related Complexities in Students' Understandings of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

The structures of enticements, deterrents and likelihoods are shown on the inner circle on the left as being encompassed by students' contemplation of risk related to academic honesty and dishonesty. Extrapolated from these meanings was a framework for situational risk assessment in students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty where students weigh enticements with deterrents and the likelihoods of unwanted outcomes. Explored throughout the

chapter were students' concerns and anxieties, their competing priorities, their speculations and hypotheses about their professors and peers, and how these complexities may figure in their analyses of matters of academic honesty and dishonesty in their learning environments.   These are summarized on the right in Figure 5.2 as complexities in students' understandings. As in the concluding figure from Chapter Four, the metaphor of the student voice appears across the bottom to indicate the meanings presented and discussed in this chapter come from what students said about their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty.

CHAPTER 6

FUTURE APPLICABILITY FOR TEACHING IN STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF ACADEMIC HONESTY AND DISHONESTY

In this chapter I present descriptions and interpretations of the meanings conveyed by students about their expectations for teaching related to their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty. Like the preceding chapters, this third analysis chapter is presented in two main sections. The first is largely descriptive of students' expectations as they voiced them and the second section describes my interpretations of the findings. The chapter is concluded with a summary.

Future Applicability in Students' Understandings of
Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

The research question addressed in this chapter is: *What do senior Education students anticipate their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty mean for them as teachers?* In seeking an answer to this question in what was voiced by students, I have treated those notions that students have either said they expected or said they did not expect to apply to their future to be the future applicability of their understandings. I have named these notions *expectations for teaching* and *expectations for professionalism* and discuss my interpretation of these as forming *students' rules for teacher integrity*. I use the same approach as in the previous two analysis chapters and present the student voice in as accurate and readable a manner as possible.

Definitions of Students' Expectations for Teaching and
Students' Expectations for Professionalism

With and without being directly asked, students engaged in discussions and made specific statements about the future applicability of their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty. *Expectations for teaching* are the aspects of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty that students anticipated would have relevance for them in their own roles as teachers of students. *Expectations for professionalism* are the aspects of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty that students anticipated would have relevance in their relationships with their colleagues in the teaching profession.

Students' Expectations for Teaching Related to Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

Students fully expected to need to respond to issues of academic dishonesty among the students they would teach. They said they expected this based on their own experiences as

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students in K to 12 education and in university. Some had already encountered issues of academic dishonesty while in teaching practicum placements. Specifically, students in this study expressed: (1) confidence in their ability to detect academic dishonesty as future teachers, (2) an expectation that they would encounter inadvertent plagiarism by their future students, and (3) views about the obligations they would have as teachers in relation to concerns for academic honesty and dishonesty. These expectations are presented below.

Personal Detection Capabilities

Students felt well-equipped to detect academic dishonesty. They credited this capability to their own experiences and observations in university-level education. Picking up on the notion expressed by students in two focus groups that future teachers learn how to detect academic dishonesty by being in an environment where people are academically dishonest, I asked whether they thought that professors were surprised when they encountered academic dishonesty. The explanation offered in both groups was that since professors had been students, they would surely have observed academic dishonesty first hand. One student's response was: "Well, if they're a prof, they've got at least a masters or a PhD, so they've been at school for quite a while so you'd think they would have seen quite a bit of it going through" (H, UofS 2,12). Another comment was similar in its meaning: "I think they've all been through school so they probably understand it on a certain level" (0, UofA 5, 12). These comments suggest that students believe that because academic dishonesty is so prevalent, one is sure to receive broad exposure to the various ways to cheat and as a result of this exposure become well able to detect it.

Inadvertent Plagiarism

Some students in this study reported that, during their teaching practica, they had already observed students inadvertently plagiarize. One student described a situation in which she had personally detected and then directly responded to academic dishonesty. The situation involved three weaker high school students who had submitted an extremely well-written paper for which the student-teacher had suspected plagiarism and followed up:

> H: …So, I went and did a quick little Google search and low and behold here's the Encyclopedia Britannica almost word for word and so I confronted them with it. They said "it's not plagiarism, what are you talking about?" Here, what they had learned, in their other class, was use as many sources as you want and put at least two in your bibliography. Whereas from my culture that I was coming from--the university-- if you even so much as glance at someone else's work, you put it [the reference] down, because you don't want to take the risk of what

you're writing sounding like [another author] without having them on your reference list So, in their case they didn't believe they were being dishonest but from the actual definition, yeah… (UofS 2, 5)

In another case of apparently inadvertent plagiarism, a student told a story from his practicum experience where another teacher received a written assignment from a student in an ESL class where the class had been asked to write a story with an action. He provided this explanation:

> G: … Some kid must have typed in "action story" into the internet and where it got was sort of an X-rated "action story" and it got handed in…We were sort of laughing at it in the staff room because clearly this ESL student had no idea what was in the story. And, the dilemma was, sure it's cheating--but, it wasn't just copy and paste off the internet. It was retyped, word for word off the web site. We sort of came up with the conclusion that in ESL [instruction] when you say "write a story, write a paragraph," they copy it off the board….So, I mean, that, that's totally completely plagiarizing but in that case I don't think it's academic dishonesty because that's what they understood as 'writing' a story. In that case the teacher had to talk to the parent and the student and say, this is what we meant, and you'll know for next time, try to do it as best as you can. (UofS 2,6)

In both of these stories of detection, the plagiarism was described by the story-teller as unintentional or inadvertent and involved information copied from internet sources. The teachers did not punish the students for their plagiarism but instead taught them how to avoid such mistakes in the future.   Students appeared to expect this to be the appropriate response by a teacher in the K to 12 education system. This expectation for an educative rather than punitive approach may explain the appreciation students expressed for professors who, rather than apply the university policy strictly to students, consulted with them about their apparent mistake and taught them how to correct their errors.

Teacher Obligations

Students identified a number of obligations related to responding to academic honesty and dishonesty that they expected to hold when they became teachers.   These included an obligation to respond to acts of academic dishonesty, an obligation to strike a balance between flexibility and fairness, and an obligation to use valid assessment tools. I describe these as obligations because they were most often expressed by students as a commitment to a particular course of action that they seemed to expect would be binding upon them as teachers.

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Obligation to respond. A number of remarks made by students in this study indicated a belief that those who teach, in university or in other settings, have a responsibility to do *something* when they suspect or detect academic dishonesty by students. Speaking about professors' responsibilities, this student phrased her expectation as: "…I think that it's their obligation, profs should do what they can. If they think someone is cheating, they need to call them on it" (K, UofA 4, 21). Similarly, this student said, " ..I think any outright cases [of academic dishonesty] the professor owes a responsibility to all of us to deal with things appropriately" (N, UofA 4, 11). Another student questioned whether a failure to respond to academic dishonesty was a form of academic dishonesty in itself: "...are you [professors] as guilty for their success at cheating as they are, if you're not stopping them" (D, UofS 1, 15)? Students clearly regarded teachers, both themselves and those that taught them, to have an obligation to respond to suspected academic dishonesty.

Obligation to balance flexibility and fairness. Students recognized that there are occasions when flexibility is warranted in response to individual circumstances. In this regard, discussions in more than one focus group included views about professors changing deadlines, granting extensions, or making exceptions that could allow for academic dishonesty. Some students commented on the complexity of this issue and identified the need to balance consistency with sensitivity to the difficulties that arise for students. The following discussion demonstrated the differing views on this issue expressed in one focus group:

> B: I've struggled with that too, as a teacher, and as from a professor. Do I stick to the deadline, do I consider that somebody might need an extra week?
> A: Then they should come and ask. There should be a point [where students take responsibility].
> B: What if half your class asks?
> F: Then you discuss it as a class. If it's before the due date, say, "If this due date is too much for you guys, it's not working out, let's see what we can do to fix it. Is there problems?" But, how can you do something after half the class has already put their paper in. (UofS 1, 17)

Students appeared to anticipate that they would face this same kind of dilemma as teachers and that ensuring that the conditions under which students complete their academic work be fair was a teacher responsibility. This might not always mean that everyone has the same deadline, but accommodating unique situations would require careful attention to maintaining fairness and

would have implications for academic honesty and dishonesty. For these students from different groups finding out too late that a professor granted an extension to a classmate was seen as fostering a kind of academic dishonesty:

> F: … we were in every class together, doing everything the same. We had the exact same work load, exact same family situation, but I got mine in on time, got a crappy mark, and that's fine. But, to have that extra three weeks with no penalty, that irks me too. Unless you request a formal extension before the due date, don't come and hand this in and tell me how busy your life is. I was being a single mom with four small children doing the exact same work load as someone who is a single person, so don't come to me and tell me that's not academically dishonest … (UofS 1, 16)
>
> G: What ticks me off is you stay up until two in the morning doing your paper and its garbage and you know its garbage but you'll get a 70 or something. Then you hand it in and half the class isn't handing it in. [Students are saying things like] "Oh no, I e-mailed him and he said I could hand it in next week." If I'd known that, I wouldn't have stayed up until two in the morning and done a crappy job of it. If you have a deadline, you should be sticking to it. (UofS 2, 21)

Both of the above comments were voiced with veracity in the respective groups indicating unannounced shifting of deadlines is both a frustrating and frequent occurrence in their experience.

Obligation to ensure valid assessments. Students expected their professors should ensure the validity of assessment tools. Presumably this would mean professors should avoid repeated exam questions or using the same entire exams from year to year. One student suggested that professors be proactive in this regard:

> K: …if they can even just be sure they use different midterms, or just different things they can do. If they have a hunch that students are trading around the midterm, then change it. Teach the students what they can so that they are better prepared to go out into the real world" (UofA 4,21)

A concern for a different type of repetitiveness in assessment tools was voiced in more than one focus group. One student who was finding the course content in her program to overlap the content in her other courses said, "It would be nice if some of the profs would get together and at least try to make up different [exam] questions" (J, UofS 3, 18). Another student felt that the curriculum should be better coordinated because she had also experienced overlap in content and

having very similar assignments in different classes, which she saw as increasing the temptation to submit past assignments:

> H: …half the assignments you get are the same. Half the classes you're taking the exact same material over and over again. If they're going to stress the same material and give you virtually the same assignment in two different classes, well, I mean, they haven't structured the program so that you have to know more, why should you be expected to write the same thing over again using different words. They haven't bothered, why should you? ...It doesn't look to me like the different departments really talk to each other…(UofS 2, 19)

Students in this study had experienced assessments that were, in their view inadequate or inviting of academic dishonesty. For them, this pointed to professors' responsibility to better coordinate and respond to compromises to their assessment methods. While students were contemplating what their professors ought to do in the above selected comments, it is logical to assume they would place the same expectations on themselves as teachers in the K to 12 education system.

Students' Expectations for Professionalism Related to
Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

Students described expectations placed on them as university students as significantly different from expectations as student-teachers in terms of acknowledging the work of others and in terms of collaborative work. These expectations are presented below.

Acknowledging Sources and Authorship

Once teaching, students did not expect to be required to acknowledge sources of ideas, lesson plans, and other resources to the same extent or in the same manner as they were required to do as university students. However, this did not mean they expected it to be acceptable to falsely claim authorship of materials or of ideas. Students explained that because the purpose of teaching is to achieve learning outcomes for students and not to demonstrate what the teacher knows or where the teacher got his or her ideas, referencing *per se* would simply be extraneous. One student articulated the difference between expectations in university compared to teaching in this way:

> B: It's very different. As a teacher we're making a career out of teaching kids. So, where we get our lesson plans or ideas, who cares? As long as the kids are getting what they need. As an academic, your profession as well as your job and

your career is based on the research that you do. Of course you want credit for that. If you don't get credit for it, what's the point of even doing it…(UofS 1, 19)

Another student gave an example of a lesson he had taught successfully for which he believed that he was in no way expected to acknowledge its source because the purpose of the lesson was to have students learn:

> D: … I was doing lessons that I've heard people talk about and they just sound like awesome ideas, so I do them. And they work. So I get, "You--come do that with my class?" I heard it [the lesson] from someone, so I do it now. I don't know who told it [to me], or who I got it from. The kids loved it and learned from it. And, I finished my internship, I passed. (UofS 1, 18)

The above statement highlights an understanding that the need to acknowledge depends on the purpose at hand. Acknowledgement is not necessary, according to this student, in a context where the purpose was not to give or receive credit for the lesson but to achieve the desired end of learning outcomes for kids and to meet a passing grade related requirement for the student-teacher.

In contrast, failure to respect your peers' work through acknowledgement was described as problematic in this student's understanding of the expectations for teaching in the practical and applied arts. He attributed this feeling to be a particular norm of the culture of the profession:

> I: …If you steal somebody's plans for something, design, without their permission, it's not necessarily in the academic realm but I would say it's equally as dishonest. In those areas, it's, there isn't usually set codes of conduct it's just when you then get together at trade meetings at guild meetings things along those lines and you are known as somebody to not ask. It seems rude. It's not that you get blacklisted, but—
> SLB: You have a reputation?
> I: You have a reputation for passing off other peoples' work for your own; that you've created this design. Usually most people don't hide their secrets, but they want their ideas to get out, they want things to expand, but if you don't give them credit for it, it's a slap in the face to them. So, it's taken much more at a personal level. I think with academic honesty, that personal experience is sometimes removed. You're just looking at names and dates and faces and books, and it becomes a lot easier to take somebody's work that you've never met, that you've never seen, or you can't physically touch it. (UofS3,11)

These last few sentences present an interesting analysis, that personally knowing the author or creator of an idea makes it morally difficult to even contemplate making false claims. This speaks to the rationalization technique of "denial of a victim" (discussed earlier in some depth in Chapters 2 and 5 and coined by Sykes & Matza, 1957) where one attempts to justify a behaviour by saying that no one was really hurt by the act. For the above student this was described as making it easier to fail to acknowledge a distant or unknown author of an idea or resource than a colleague or peer in the same professional circles.

Students in one focus group described specific advice from professors about gathering materials from multiple sources and the matter of acknowledgement. They reported professors advising them to not "reinvent the wheel" (K, UofA 4, 6) and to "expect to be photocopying constantly because you will need the available resources" (F, UofS 1, 14) and to "use the internet for lesson plans…adjust it to your own way of thinking and use it" (A, UofS 1, 9). These students talked about this advice as though there was no expectation to keep track of the source of the materials and there was an implication that advice like this was antithetic to notions of academic honesty and dishonesty.

Students' understandings highlighted in this section point to what many would regard as a narrow and incomplete view of what the purpose is of acknowledging the work of others in the university context. While several students referred to referencing as a way of honoring the intellectual work of others rather than merely giving credit or ensuring that one is not perceived to have falsely claimed authorship, they did not say anything that suggested they understood acknowledging, in whatever manner, the work of others as a means to assist the reader, to trace the knowledge in a field, or to build a persuasive argument.

Collaboration with Colleagues

Stemming from discussions about unpermitted collaboration as a form of academic dishonesty, students contrasted what they had experienced in university to what was expected in a professional teaching situation. Students in this study expected the profession of teaching to be more collaborative in nature than what they had experienced in university. This did not, however, mean that students' university experiences were completely devoid of collaboration. This student, acknowledging differences in the collaborative climate of teaching compared with being a university student, credited what he thought may have been a more collaborative

approach to the small size and longer duration of the program he was in compared to others in Education:

> I: …With both the Home Ec and the IA students, we get to be a fairly tight group. Whether it's our trade background? Kind of the idea of collegiality and working together and not letting our friends be left behind. We work together a little bit more. We share resources. If we're working on an Ed Foundations paper, for example, just a couple of weeks ago, one of us found a couple of journal articles and a web site that was great and they e-mailed to say where to find this stuff to everybody, just to help us all out. I wouldn't consider that being dishonest. We work together. We do our own papers. (UofS 3, 16)

A student in this same group described working together with peers as a necessity in university:

> J: You practically have to [be collegial] in university. If you don't have someone you can work with or some group that you can work with and bounce ideas off, you're not going to make it through anything….There's no way you can get through it all if…copying your own notes, doing all the assignments, you'll never get through it, you'll never get through university. You kind of have to work as a group to get through or you're not going to get through it. (UofS 3, 17)

The above student does not explicitly say that students are collaborating in an academically dishonest way, and yet there is an implication in her descriptions that the collaboration that has "gotten her through" may have taken the form of copying assignments. Nonetheless, the importance of having a peer group with which to collaborate or share workload was emphasized. Also talking about the value of collaboration, these students had the following discussion:

> G: You should be able to ask people [to share resources], like this…because that's what it's like in the real world. Somebody has a good journal article at home they can just turn it over to you and say "hey, check this out." You should be able to do that.
> H: To me that's more collaboration. That's not, gimme, gimme, gimme. You're both bringing something to the table – not just swapping ideas – but making them all better. That's how things work, you don't hear of too many people who are doing it all by themselves.
> SLB: As teachers?
> G: As anybody. I don't think it matters.
> SLB: As a professional?
> H: I think that's where university education falls down. We're so highly competitive up to the point where you actually get a job and then after that it's collaborative.

G: School didn't prepare me for this at all. (UofS 2,11-12)

In the above excerpt, the final statements of both students indicated that they expect to be underprepared for the collaborative nature of teaching and that their university education had failed them in this regard. Even with the permitted or possibly problematic collaboration students engaged in, they appeared to expect a higher level of collaboration once they are teachers and that questions of academic honesty and dishonesty will not apply.

Describing what he appeared to believe was a highly collaborative and desirable approach to sharing resources, this student shared his experience with a common resource that existed in the school in which he practice taught:

L: I had a pretty neat experience with my [practicum]. I was in math and they created these, like collaboratively, the Math Department created these skeleton lesson plans for every single math subject…these binders, stacks of binders with these lesson plans in them. So, I would use that but they were hugely modified and I would bring in extra resources and that was your own…(UofA 4,6-7)

Similar to the student who appreciated the shared resources, this student reflected on her experience and talked about how sharing ideas allowed everyone to build and develop their own lesson plan resources, seeing it as a benefit to all that resources be shared:

J: Even just with being teachers, you share lesson plans, you share units and stuff like that. We're doing that all the time anyways and so, and a lot of the assignments are unit plans or lesson plans, so you just share ideas and get ideas off of each other and like even after our internship we've all had lots of different experiences so if we each share everybody's experience that you get so much more information so I think that, with a lot of our assignments, its about reflecting and lesson plans and this and that so that – you use everybody's experience to do your own thing.(UofS 3, 18)

By way of contrast, the following comment suggests that one teacher's apparent protection of intellectual property stands out as an anomaly and is noticeable in a professional culture among teachers that this student expected to be highly collaborative:

N: I know I experienced [in one practicum] the mentor teacher I was working with, she was a department head, about a 30-year teacher. Her filing cabinets were locked. They were always locked. I came out of that experience with nothing except the notes that I made. And, she did not share anything. That was her personal professional work and whether it was because she thought she had

the best plans and didn't want anyone to up her or she just felt, she worked on them, they were hers. It was interesting. And, then my [other practicum] was the completely opposite experience, the whole school was open. You wanted something, just ask the person, go photo copy it, take it, use it for yourself, adapt if it if you want [saying things like] "Hey it worked for me, use it," you know. So, I think it [whether it is acceptable to share resources or not] has a lot to do with the permission of the person. (UofA 4, 6-7)

In sum, students in this study tend to expect and look forward to a highly collaborative professional experience as teachers and expect that this will mean that resources are willingly shared. The way this student expressed the expectation captures an understanding apparently shared by many students in this study: "I think share as much as you can. I think it's in the best interest of the students and the teachers as long as you don't claim someone else's work as yours" (K, UofA 4,7).

Discussion of Students' Expectations for Teaching and Professionalism
Related to Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

Students voiced expectations for themselves in the future as teachers and as members of a profession. Students volunteered stories about detecting and responding to academic dishonesty and they shared their own experiences with the profession of teaching, contrasting what they were experiencing as students to what they expected to experience as teachers. Also expressed were expectations for the practices of their professors which I treated as providing further insight into what students' current understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty mean for them in the future.

Expectations for teaching centred on a requirement to respond to academic dishonesty. Students expected they would be quite capable of detecting academic dishonesty because of the broad exposure to the "tricks" of cheating during their own schooling and those already observed while teaching. They expected in particular to need to respond to inadvertent plagiarism and to do so by teaching the violating students where they made mistakes and how to reference sources properly. Students expected that teachers hold a number of obligations related to responding to academic dishonesty. The most prevalent of these was an expectation that teachers respond to, and therefore not ignore, suspicions of academic dishonesty. While students in this study expected teachers to need to show some flexibility when students required extensions or other allowances because of unforeseen difficulties, they expected there to be an obligation to balance

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flexibility for individual students with fairness to other students. Students expected that when they were teachers that they would have an obligation to ensure that their assessment tools are valid. This meant ensuring that assignments are not the same from year to year or similar to those required in other classes so that students do not find it both tempting and easy to submit their own previous work or the work of others. Similarly, students expected that if teachers suspect that a copy of a test is being circulated, that teachers have an obligation to change that test to ensure that academic dishonesty does not occur. Overall, students expected to play an active role in teaching students about academic honesty, in deterring academic dishonesty, and in ensuring that the assessments of learning are both valid and fair.

Expectations for professionalism among students were focused on acknowledgement of sources and collaboration. As teachers, students in this study expected there would be less need to acknowledge sources when compared to what had been expected of them as students. Connected to this expectation was a belief that the work of teaching would be more collaborative than what they had experienced as students in university. These expectations were based largely on their teaching practicum experiences to date. Students explained the differences as relating to the purposes of teaching compared to being a university student. Where university students are concerned with individual achievement, teachers are concerned with fostering learning in others, according to students. For students, this meant that among teachers the source of particular resources or ideas was less important than the outcomes for the students they were teaching. Students in this study did not appear to believe this meant it would be acceptable for teachers to misrepresent authorship or claim individual credit for outcomes achieved through collaboration with their fellow teachers, but that it simply was not a prevalent concern in professional practice.

While discussing their expectations for their futures as teachers related to academic honesty and dishonesty students contrasted and compared the environment for being a student with the environment they expected for being a teacher. Revealed were how students see the relationships with peers, the goals of day-to-day efforts, and valid sources of ideas and knowledge. These are summarized in Figure 6.1 below.

	Current Student Experience →	**Expectations for Teaching and Professionalism**
Relationships with peers	Mostly competitive	Mostly collaborative
Goals of day-to-day efforts	Grades for self	Student-learning outcomes
Valid sources of ideas and knowledge	External and impersonal--gleaned from expertise of distant others	Internal and personal— teacher-generated and shared among colleagues

Figure 6.1 Students' comparison of current experiences as a student to future expectations as a teacher.

First is the comparison of the relationship with peers, where students found their relationship with their peers in university to be mostly competitive and expected the relationship to be mostly collaborative as teachers. Since much K to 12 education continues to occur with a lone teacher in front of a classroom of students behind a closed door an expectation for collaboration is somewhat intriguing. I argue this comparison, on the part of students, may instead indicate the role of competition in the student experience where students feel they are in competition with one another for grades, status, and access to desirable jobs or other opportunities. Having a less competitive relationship with peers at work compared with peers at university may mean that students expect collaboration to follow naturally. Consistent with the expectations for collaboration, is a belief that there will be a shared goal for student-learning among teachers. This belief is in contrast to the goal said to prevail among students which was largely to obtain the grades needed to advance in a degree program and ultimately graduate. Valid sources of ideas and knowledge was contrasted in students' expectations as well. As students, the most valued ideas are those of an expert. Sometimes the expert is an individual professor, but usually the expert is both physically and existentially removed from the student, with a scholarly record

and credibility among his or her academic peers. Since students do not meet that standard of expertise, their ideas must be supported by the work of these distant experts and referenced accordingly. The approach students expect once they are teaching appears to be starkly different. They believe the validity of ideas to be determined on efficacy, that is, the achievement of intended student-learning outcomes. Justification of the value of an idea does not come from external expertise but from first-hand experience and evidence. Acknowledging the source of ideas then as a teacher is about attributing or sharing credit for an idea, not about supporting or bolstering an idea.

Students' Rules for Teacher Integrity

Appropriate response to suspected academic dishonesty was expressed by students as an area of obligation for teachers and professors alike. It was a matter of teacher integrity for students. Carter (1996) defined three criteria for integrity. First was the ability to discern right from wrong; second was to act in accordance; and third was to be willing and able to explain one's actions publicly. While Carter used dramatic examples to articulate these criteria (such as willingness to die for what one believes), the notions that are key to his conceptualization are present in what students said they expected from both their professors and from themselves as teachers.

In the case of discerning right from wrong, students understood academic dishonesty to be wrong and expected that they would be quite capable of detecting it, that is, able to effectively discern academic honesty from academic dishonesty. Key to this, based on the characteristics that define academic honesty and dishonesty for students in this study, is discerning whether intent to be academically dishonest can be said to exist in a given act. For example, for students part of discerning whether an act of plagiarism is right or wrong is discerning if it was inadvertent or intentional. Students acknowledged, as did Carter, that "Discernment is hard work; it takes time and emotional energy" (p. 10).

For action in accordance with what one discerns is right or wrong, I extrapolate that this aligns with students' expectation that teachers ought to respond to suspected academic dishonesty. Students' views on this are somewhat paradoxical as some did not seem to find it realistic that professors follow up with suspicions of academic dishonesty (a finding discussed in Chapter 5 relating to likelihoods of detection and punishment) and others clearly thought it was an important responsibility regardless of the challenges of doing so. Students did indicate that

professors who take the time to follow up on suspicions of dishonesty and take the opportunity to teach students proper practices are doing the right thing.

The willingness and ability to explain oneself publicly is less apparent in what students expressed about their expectations for teaching. This willingness to explain may be most connected to the idea that students find it admirable for a professor or teacher to teach an individual student or group of students about an error that could be regarded as academic dishonesty rather than adhere to the "letter of the law" and harshly penalize academic dishonesty. The willingness and ability to explain may also extend to the belief that teachers need to maintain transparency in professional practice. One example of this would be acknowledging the source of materials or ideas in a way appropriate to the professional setting. Another example is expecting that any adjustment to the rules under which academic work is to be completed, like an extension on a deadline, ought to occur in a consistent and timely manner and in a way that is applied equitably to all students.

Studies of teachers' moral judgment have shown that teachers' moral reasoning is associated with a conceptualization of rules (Chang, 1994). This finding is consistent with my sense that students' expectations for teaching and professionalism translate with ease into rules for teacher integrity. As shown in this and the two previous analysis chapters, students see teachers (including their professors) as having key roles to play in ensuring academic honesty and creating a climate for academic integrity. I propose that the findings outlined in this chapter suggest that the following rules for teacher integrity exist in the understandings of students who participated in this study:

1. Teachers ought to respond to the academic dishonesty they detect—seeking first to determine intent to discern whether students require educative or punitive responses to their behavior;
2. Teachers ought to ensure the validity of the assessment tools they employ;
3. Teachers ought to ensure that any exceptions made in response to individual student circumstances occur in a context of fairness for all students;
4. Teachers ought to access and acknowledge the work of others in ways appropriate to the teaching profession; and
5. Teachers ought to work collaboratively including sharing resources willingly.

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These inferred or tacit rules may be said to hold some of the characteristics of moral rules for teachers (Smedes, 1991). That is, they tell teachers what they ought to do in the form of an understandable statement and are phrased as applying to all teachers. They serve to tell teachers ahead of time what to do and allow teachers to determine if what they have already done is right or wrong. They are rules, however, for *teacher* integrity and do not apply to all people in all settings. Students in this study recognized that the teaching profession approaches some matters differently than other professions and that the goals of teaching differ from goals in other settings. Smedes might say that this means that the source of these rules is the organization rather than a moral authority. He defined the organization as a "group of people who work (or play) together according to pre-set rules" (p. 47) and said that organizations need rules to get things done efficiently. That is, organizations cannot function effectively unless everybody can be trusted to stick to the rules. Smedes also said that any organization may insert moral rules into its practice "because good morality sometimes makes for effective operation" (p. 47). Looking more deeply into the five rules extrapolated from students' understandings, observed in Rule 1 is a moral rule—people ought not ignore wrongdoing; in Rules 2 and 3—people ought to be fair in their dealings; in Rule 4—people ought not claim what belongs to others as their own; and in Rule 5—people ought to work together for the common good. However, students' statements about these matters were not generalized to all of humankind and as a result I suggest that they are appropriately regarded as rules for teacher integrity.

Chapter Summary

This chapter included findings that respond to the third research question: *What do senior undergraduate Education students anticipate their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty mean for them as future teachers?* Expectations for teaching and professionalism were gleaned from what students said they expected when they were teachers but also were extrapolated from what they said their own professors ought to do when faced with academic dishonesty. These are presented in the inner circle shown in Figure 6.2 and depicted as encompassed by rules for teacher integrity.

```
Future Applicability  for
        Teaching          ──────▶   Complexity in Students' Understandings

  ┌─────────────────────┐           Questions of adequate preparation for
  │ Rules for Teacher   │ ─────▶     teaching
  │    Integrity        │            ─────────────────────────────────
  │  ┌───────────────┐  │            Predictions of personal detection
  │  │ Expectations  │  │            capabilities, and likelihoods of
  │  │     for       │ ─────▶        inadvertent plagiarism
  │  │   Teaching    │  │
  │  └───────────────┘  │            Projections of teacher obligations to
  │   Expectations      │            respond, to balance flexibility and
  │      for            │            fairness, top ensure valid assessments
  │  Professionalism    │ ─────▶     ─────────────────────────────────
  │                     │            Ideals for collaboration with colleagues
  └─────────────────────┘
                                     Pragmatism in acknowledging sources
                                     and authorship

  ┌───────────────────────────────────┐
  │           Student Voice           │
  └───────────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 6.2 Future Applicability and Related Complexities in Students' Understandings of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

On the right hand side are summaries of the nuance present in students' understandings. These included predictions of encountering inadvertent plagiarism and of ability to detect academic dishonesty of various kinds; projections about the kinds of obligations teachers have for maintaining academic honesty, ideals for collaboration, and pragmatism about acknowledging the work of others. Students made intriguing comparisons between their experience as university students and what they had already experienced as practice teachers that further enriched the findings described in this chapter. Students' appeared to believe that their current experience was less collaborative and less outcomes-oriented than what they would experience as a teacher. They also believed that the ideas and knowledge they themselves, or their peers, would generate as teachers would be considered more valid compared with their experience in university. As was the case with the concluding figures in the previous two analysis chapters, the student voice is shown across the bottom so as to indicate it as the source of the findings described in this chapter.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As intended, through this study, I have fulfilled my purpose to discover participant senior undergraduate Education students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty. Detailed insights into how the issues were perceived by students in the context of other aspects of their experiences in higher education were gathered. Findings have included students' definition of academic dishonesty and culpability for academic dishonesty, structures used in the contemplation of risk, and expectations for teaching and professionalism related to academic honesty and dishonesty. In this chapter, first I discuss students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty, presenting an integrative figure to visually depict, holistically, what was discovered. I take my analysis to a more speculative level and discuss students' vision for a system of academic honesty and the ways students' appeared to see themselves in the context of the university. Then, I propose implications of the findings for higher education policy, for communication of policy, for instructional practice, for administrative practice as well as several aspects of future research methodology. The chapter and dissertation are closed with a final personal reflection and comment on the study described in this dissertation.

Discussion of the Findings

In this section of the chapter, I summarize the findings and integrate them into a figure that depicts a holistic view of what was discovered overall about students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty relating the findings to other research, discuss how the findings can inform theories that speak to students' judgments about academic dishonesty, and speculate on what can be said about students' vision of academic honesty and their sense of students' role or place in the university.

An Integrated Perspective of Students' Understandings of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

To reiterate, the purpose of this study was to discover senior undergraduate Education students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty and to achieve this purpose three research questions guided the study. Each of the three foregoing chapters of this dissertation was dedicated to the findings related to one of three research questions. The questions were:

1. What is the substantive content of senior undergraduate Education students' expressed understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty?

2. How do senior undergraduate Education students structure their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty?

3. What do senior undergraduate Education students anticipate their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty mean for them as future teachers?

While the findings related to each of these questions have been summarized earlier in this dissertation, they have not been presented together nor have potential connections between the findings been explored until this chapter. The findings are reiterated and expanded upon below and captured together visually in Figure 7.1.

| Substantive Content | Structures in use | Future Applicability |

Principles of Culpability

Existence of Rules
+
Intent to Break Known Rules

Unearned Grade Advantage

Contemplation of Risk

Enticements
+
Deterrents
+
Likelihoods

Rules for Teacher Integrity

Expectations for Teaching

Expectations for Professionalism

Student Voice

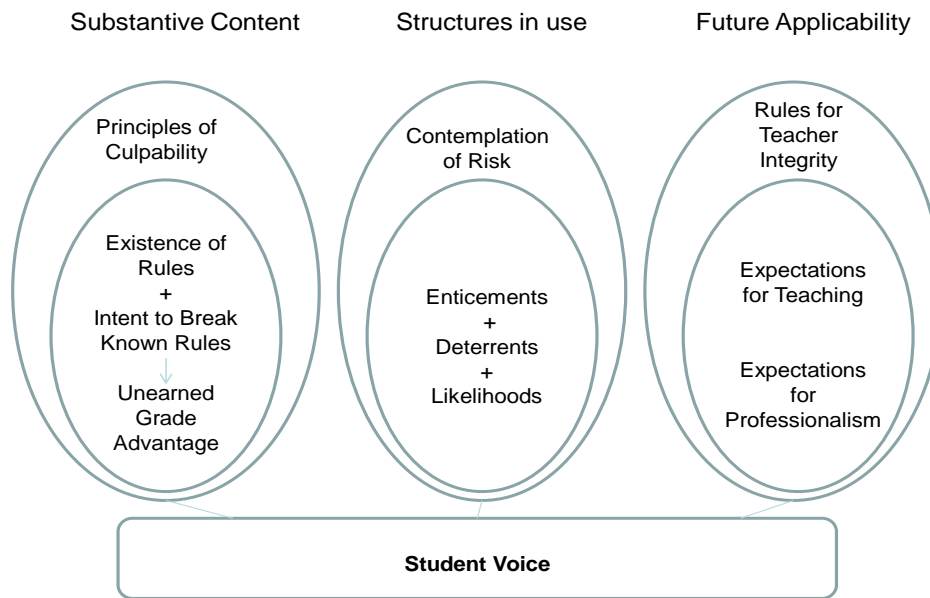*Figure 7.1* An Integrated Perspective of Senior Education Students' Understandings of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

At the bottom centre of Figure 7.1 are the students and the metaphor of the student voice that has been previously defined in this dissertation as a notion to represent the meaning that is conveyed by students when they verbally describe to others what it is like to understand their

educational experiences in the ways that they do. Branching off from the student voice are three realms of students' understandings identified as substantive content, structures in use, and future applicability. Within each are the key elements as expressed by students. Each of the three sets of circles have appeared earlier in the dissertation separately and are now shown together to assist in the review and integration of the findings

The substantive content of students' understandings was revealed through essential elements of academic honesty and dishonesty—characterizations that students expressed as being fundamental and inherent to the nature of the phenomenon. Taken together, academic dishonesty appeared to be defined by students to occur when a student intentionally breaks known rules for academic honesty and dishonesty that they were capable of following and which then results in an unearned grade advantage for that student. This definition meant that students understood academic dishonesty, at its most basic, to be the breach of rules. Without rules, there could be no academic dishonesty *per se*. Further, students explained that if students were unaware of the rules or lacking the skills or knowledge to adhere to them, then behavior that broke the rules was to be understood as a matter of ignorance or error, not academic dishonesty. Students said confusion or ignorance of the rules was most likely to occur in matters of plagiarism and referencing—a concern also raised by students in studies conducted by Devlin and Gray (2007); James et al. (2002), and Park (2003). Of particular salience in students' understandings was whether or not a grade was deserved, indicating that the notion of academic honesty and dishonesty only applies to academic work that is graded. With this emphasis on grades the question in a given situation for students becomes one of whether or not a grade is deserved and the extent to which students can be said to have been in a fair competition with one another for grades. If rules are not apparent and students lack the skills to follow the rules and no grade advantage appears to follow, students do not regard a violation of the rules to qualify as academic dishonesty. When any one of these three essential elements (existence of rules, intent to break known rules, and a resulting unearned grade advantage) was absent from a given scenario discussed by students, the extent to which students had common views about what constitutes academic dishonesty appeared to lessen.

Previous studies examining students' definitions of academic honesty and dishonesty have focused on whether students understood the rules for academic honesty and dishonesty with varying results depending on the nature of the acts under examination (Higbee & Thomas, 2002;

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Christen-Hughes & McCabe, 2006b; Burrus et al., 2007; Yeo, 2007; Ashworth et al., 1997)).

For example, exam cheating has more clearly been defined as a form of academic dishonesty for students than have been concerns for unpermitted collaboration or adhering to referencing conventions (Ashworth, et al., 1997). Findings for these studies have been largely based on students' recognition (or failure to recognize) breaches in rules for academic honesty and dishonesty. My interpretation is that the students in the present study demonstrated a more principled approach to defining academic dishonesty than other research has shown. This approach naturally manifested as principles of culpability in students' understandings. The first principle of culpability deals with awareness—to be culpable for academic dishonesty, the student must have understood the rules for academic honesty and dishonesty. The second principle deals with volition—to be culpable for academic dishonesty, the student must have freely chosen to break the rules that define academic honesty and dishonesty. The third principle deals with effect—to be culpable for academic dishonesty, the student must have benefited from his or her actions by receiving an unearned grade advantage.

Depicted next in Figure 7.1 are the structures in use in students' understandings. These structures were interpreted as being enticements to academic dishonesty, deterrents from academic dishonesty, and likelihoods of unwanted outcomes of academic dishonesty. These structures mirrored research reviewed in Chapter Two about the reasons students are academically dishonest (e.g., Franklyn-Stokes & Newstead, 1995; McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield, 1999; Payne & Nantz, 1994; Ashworth, Bannister & Thorne, 1997; Park 2003; Devlin & Gray, 2007). Students volunteered numerous situational considerations that influenced their understandings in this regard, a phenomenon that Ashworth et al. (1997) also observed in their qualitative study of students' understandings. In some situations students recognized enticements to academic dishonesty that included the potential for the relief of time pressure, improvement of grades, enhancement of competitive standing, avoidance of irrelevant content, and just responses to unfair practices by others. These personally rewarding outcomes would be at risk, if not completely foregone, by maintaining academic honesty according to students. Students were deterred from academic dishonesty by the potential for the application of penalties, the prospect of future incompetence as a teacher, and by the compromise of personal integrity they said they would experience by being dishonest. According to students, some situations presented increased likelihoods of the unwanted outcomes of academic

dishonesty of detection and punishment. Students saw the likelihoods of detection and subsequent punishment as increasing when class size was small and professors as a result had improved capacity to detect and follow up on concerns; when there were greater levels of faculty-student familiarity and as a result faculty would better recognize a lack of authenticity in the work of an individual student; when assignments required unique or subjective answers rather than those which were more objective, professors would detect repetition in answers that indicate copying; and when professors expressed a commitment to being diligent about following up on suspicions of academic dishonesty students expected they would be more likely to do so than professors who did not express such a commitment. The emphasis placed by students on these considerations revealed that students analyze situations for the risks associated with academic dishonesty. This analysis appeared to allow them to understand that, for some students in some situations, academic dishonesty can be a gamble worth taking. These findings are consistent with those of others (e.g., Ashworth et al., 1997; Michaels & Miethe, 1989; Park, 2003; Buckley, et al., 1986; Payne & Nantz, 1994) where researchers have also found students to contemplate the risks and to sometimes describe them as worth taking.

The third realm of students' understandings depicted in Figure 7.1 shows the future applicability of students' understandings as it related to their expectations as future teachers. Two categories of expectation were apparent: expectations for teaching and expectations for professionalism. For teaching, students' expected that they would encounter academic dishonesty, both intended and inadvertent, especially regarding matters of plagiarism. They expected to be obligated to respond and to more often take an educative than punitive approach in their response. To foster academic honesty, they expected to be obligated to ensure the validity of their assessment tools. In particular this approach meant varying assignments and exams used. For professionalism, students expected a different requirement to acknowledge sources than they had been expected to adhere to as university students. While misrepresenting authorship would not be acceptable, the source of one's ideas or resources would not be as great a concern in professional practice because of the focus on student learning outcomes rather than on the defensibility of lesson plans or other resources in academic terms. Occasions for acknowledging the work of others in a manner akin to referencing in university simply were not expected to present themselves with any regularity once these students were teachers. Collaboration, on the other hand, was expected to be a regular occurrence. Students

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characterized teaching as more collaborative than being a student had been. They focused on the individualistic and competitive nature of being a student that they anticipated would be largely absent in the teaching profession. The collaborative climate held meaning for academic honesty and dishonesty for students, perhaps reflecting their attribution of cheating behaviours to the competitive climate of student life. Beyond matters of specific expectations were overarching comparisons apparent in students' understandings of their relationship with peers, the goals of day-to-day efforts, and valid sources of ideas and knowledge in their current student experience compared with what they expected their experience would be as teacher.

Bases of Students' Judgments about Academic Dishonesty

Considering these findings for their alignment with theoretical frameworks and for any new contributions to theory that are suggested is worthy of discussion at this point. I have chosen to focus discussion of this kind on the extent of the alignment of the findings of this study with Rest's (1990) Four Component Model of Moral Behaviour and the stage of student development that is suggested by students' reliance on the authority of the professor in matters of academic honesty and dishonesty. Discussion of these theories in intended to highlight the key features from theory that accompany the phenomenon of understanding academic honesty and dishonesty and to comment on any unique or specific contribution of the new knowledge and insight gained.

Senior Education Students' Reasoning and Rest's (1990) Model of Moral Behaviour

As noted in the review of the literature in Chapter Two, research has indicated that most students know that academic dishonesty is wrong and yet the majority of students, when asked via survey, report they have nonetheless engaged in academic dishonesty. Students in this study appeared to clearly understand academic dishonesty as a form of wrong doing for which both students and professors/teachers hold responsibility and yet their discussion only occasionally took an overtly moral or ethical tone. One can speculate this lack of a moral emphasis in students' understandings is because students seem more likely to view academic dishonesty as "rules of the game" (as Smedes, 1991, might recognize it) rather than grounded in scholarly principles or an ethic of authentic learning. Rest's (1994) four psychological components for his theory of determinants of moral behavior, which he said involve complex interactions and do not necessarily occur in order, are useful in considering these findings further.

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Moral sensitivity, Component I in Rest's (1994) theory, is about having awareness of how one's own actions affect other people and being aware of possible actions and their consequences. An awareness of the potential consequences is very apparent in students' extensive discussions and apparent analysis of risk of unwanted outcomes of academic dishonesty. Students described being able to appreciate the source of temptations to cheat in terms of enticements to academic dishonesty, deterrents from academic dishonesty, and the likelihoods of unwanted outcomes. Much of the discussion of this kind, however, centred on the outcomes for the individual rather than for the group of whatever size or scope. Students may only have moral sensitivity to some aspects of the phenomenon of academic honesty and dishonesty.

Moral judgment is Component II and is described by Rest (1994) as the ability to determine which of the alternative lines of action is just or right. In students' comments, I observed claims by students that no one is hurt when, for example, students take academically dishonest short cuts in relation to content that they believe is irrelevant to their future course work or their future professional work. There were more comments, however, that indicated that students did recognize that cheating, in whatever form, upsets the fairness of assessment, a matter of importance to all students, to professors, to institutions, and to future employers and society at large. My extrapolation of students' essential elements of academic dishonesty to principles of culpability in students' understanding suggests that students can describe a system of moral judgment that relates to academic honesty and dishonesty.

Moral motivation, Component III in Rest's (1994) theory is concerned with the importance given to moral values in competition with other values. Students could discuss the dilemmas of competing priorities or values when the opportunity to choose academic dishonesty arises, especially as appeared in their assessment of risks and discussion of situational considerations. They pointed out that different students and focused on different goals and experience different pressures as a result. Students in this study did talk about the dilemmas they face and aspects of personal integrity and honesty and in many cases expressed a motivation to do the "right" thing.

Moral character is Component IV. A person must have the moral character to withstand the pressures that may come with behaving in a moral way to have moral character, according to Rest. A small number of students expressed themselves in such a way where they saw

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themselves as committed to integrity, to their own authentic learning, and to being honest even when those around them are dishonest. Comments of this nature are highlighted in the analysis chapters as deterrents to academic dishonesty under categories such as compromise to personal integrity and future competence as a teacher. Additionally, some students talked about wanting to be positive role models as it related to academic honesty and dishonesty, and this included demonstrating the capacity to withstand the temptations to cheat.

The findings of this study align to some degree with Rest's theory of the determinants of moral behaviour. Consistent with moral sensitivity was students' considerations of how actions of an academically dishonest nature could affect themselves as well as others. Moral judgment was revealed to some degree by how students appeared to discern where academic dishonesty could be said to have occurred. Aligned with the notion of moral motivation was students' recognition of the place of personal motives and pressures in decision-making about whether to act in an academically dishonest way. Notions of moral character surfaced throughout the discussions when students expressed their desire to be a person, and a future teaching professional, who behaved in a moral way. This apparent alignment, recognized in retrospect, of the four components would likely prove an interesting tool or lens to apply to this or similar data on academic honesty and dishonesty in the future.

Senior Education Students' Reasoning and Characteristics of Stages of Student Development

Findings of this study have suggested to me that students largely base their judgments about academic dishonesty on what their professors say and do in relation to academic honesty and dishonesty. While students' reasoning also appeared to be based on concerns like fairness, authenticity, learning, and competence, the role of professors was a key feature in their reasoning about academic honesty and dishonesty. Rules for teacher integrity apparent in students' understanding also reflect the central role of the professor/teacher in fostering academic honesty. Students' translated this into a sense of their own future as teachers where they expected to have certain obligations in this regard.

While students' reasoning about academic honesty and dishonesty appeared to contain the four components posited in Rest's theory, unexpected findings that at the very least were surprising to me, was the extent of the reliance on the professor to explicitly or implicitly indicate the rules for academic honesty and dishonesty in his or her classroom. Also surprised was students' analyses of professors' personal and situational proclivities for detecting and

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dealing with academic dishonesty. Existence of a policy or policies beyond the classroom setting appeared to be largely extraneous or of minor assistance or importance to students when discerning what the *real* rules would be. Such a focus suggests that students have a degree of deference to their professors that I had not expected. This deference may indicate epistemic assumptions exemplifying the earliest stages of cognitive development attributed to college students by cognitive psychologists. Typical of this earliest stage, variously named by Perry (1970) as dualism, by Baxter-Magolda (1990) as absolute knowing, and by King and Kitchener (1994) as pre-reflective thinking, is that knowledge is certain and held by experts who impart this knowledge to students who would not expect to need to question or challenge such knowledge but merely to receive and integrate it. When students at such a stage see those they expect ought to be experts in academic honesty and dishonesty—their professors—fail to respond to encounters with cheating, they would interpret those experts to not care rather than to be struggling with any complexity such encounters with dishonesty present. Perhaps exemplifying characteristics of the next stage of development, students in this study did appear to have some understanding of the situational demands on professors and how these might explain their "turning a blind eye." This appreciation might suggest some sense that knowledge can be uncertain and some reflection and questioning is needed. This view is more characteristic of multiplicity (Perry, 1970), transitional knowing (Baxter-Magolda, 1990) and quasi-reflective thinking (King and Kitchener, 1994) where knowledge is regarded as less certain and even uncertain leading to the possible interpretation that no one way of understanding a phenomenon is more defendable than another—relativism.

Of possible significance to future research is that Perry, Baxter-Magolda, and King and Kitchener regard students to be moving through stages of development that are supported and advanced by high education. Students in the present study were by all definitions senior students and it would appear were demonstrating placement in the earlier stages. Reasons that students might express matters of academic honesty and dishonesty in such ways could be explored using the work of these theorists.

Students' Vision for a System of Academic Honesty

The findings of this study present a multi-faceted conceptualization of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty. Students' appeared to understand academic honesty and dishonesty as having a moral basis, a finding consistent with that of Ashworth et al.

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(1997). Although a language of morality *per se* was rarely used by students, they clearly understood concerns for academic honesty and dishonesty to include concerns for right and wrong in their learning environments. Students in this study were concerned, as too were Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) when they discussed reasons universities ought to care about academic dishonesty, that students who cheat may get higher grades than they deserve; that cheating can appear acceptable or permissible when it is understood to occur with little consequence; that students who cheat do not acquire the knowledge or experiences to prepare them in their chosen profession; that cheating and perceived unfairness in general hurts students morale and leads to cynicism; and that students who are dishonest in university may be dishonest in the workplace.

Students in this study typically framed their definition of academic honesty as the absence of academic dishonesty.   Little was said by students to suggest they conceived academic honesty as something worthy unto itself. Rather, they described academic honesty as desirable because it allows one not to be academically dishonest.   Said another way, for students, academic honesty is the state of not being academically dishonest. As discussed in the last section, this view of academic honesty may reflect the strong reliance in students' understandings on the rules and little contemplation of higher-level principles like truthfulness, authenticity, integrity, justice, fairness, community and so on.   An inability to discuss academic honesty for its own merits may also reflect a developmental stage (as per Perry 1970, Baxter-Magolda, 1990, and King and Kitchner 1994) or level of moral reasoning (Rest & Narvaez, 1994) among students where they rely on authorities to define the terms of engagement and these are largely regarded to be at the level of individual rather than group or societal concern.

In the absence of direct or very sophisticated expressions of what academic honesty means to students, I have attempted to build on what students said worked to foster academic honesty. Translating what they said did not work into more positive ideas, I propose that revealed in students' understandings was a vision for a system of academic honesty that resembles a moral system. A well-functioning moral system was characterized by Rest, Bebeau, and Volker (1986) as follows:

> All the participants in a society know the principles that govern their interactions,
> when they appreciate that their interests are taken into account, when they see that
> there are no arbitrary imbalances in the distributions of burdens and benefits, and

when they want to support the system because the system is optimizing the
mutual benefits of living together. (p. 2)

There is evidence of the elements articulated in this characterization of a moral system in the findings of this study even though students may not have organized them in accordance with the idea of a moral system nor did their understandings suggest a moral system that is necessarily complete or functioning well. First, students' emphasis on the importance of rules for academic honesty and dishonesty coupled with students' ability to adhere to them competently, aligns with the requirement that all members of a group know the principles that govern their interactions. Second, students articulated their interests as their need to develop competence for their future professional roles and as their need to maintain their sense of personal integrity. Students saw these interests as being taken into account when the content of the course work was relevant to their futures in some way and when a system of enforcement was enacted that deterred and penalized academic dishonesty. Third, knowing that the conditions and tools for assessment were valid was a way for students to know that there was a fair distribution of burdens (time and effort) and benefits (grades). Fairness in this regard meant, for example, knowing that individuals who are allowed extensions on deadlines are being treated equitably rather than receiving an advantage not offered to or asked for by others.

The concept of optimization of mutual benefits appears last in Rest, Bebeau and Volker's (1986) description and has little to equate with in students' understandings discovered through this study. The individualism rather than communalism suggested by students' extensive discussions of competition for grades may explain a lack of sense of mutuality. The mutual benefit to be optimized would appear to be that students' academic standing in relation to each other is deserved. Fairness of ranking was especially emphasized in competition for admission to selective programs, for scholarships, or for desirable employment. To the extent that students asserted that they wanted a fair system for the earning of grades and the ranking of students, academic honesty was to their mutual benefit. This rather narrow view of the mutual benefit available from a moral system of academic honesty and dishonesty suggests that a particular gap in students' understandings occurs regarding the mutual benefits of authenticity and integrity in learning and in the production of knowledge.

Mimicking the structure of Rest et al.'s (1986) description, my interpretation is that for students, a system for academic dishonesty is functioning well when all students know and

understand the rules for academic honesty and dishonesty, when they appreciate their needs to develop competence and to maintain personal integrity are taken into account by professors and the university, when they see that the requirements for academic work are equitably determined and that grades are fairly earned, and when they want to support the system because they want students to be deserving of their academic standing in relation to others and any privileges that they allow.

Sense of Roles in the University in Students' Understandings

Early on in my analysis of the data I became sensitive to an underlying meaning in what students said that indicated to me their sense of role in the university. In this section, I present an additional exploration of students' understandings of roles that they hold in relation to the phenomenon of academic honesty and dishonesty and discuss my interpretations using metaphors intended to represent the meanings students conveyed. Before embarking on this exploration, I discuss the value of metaphors in understanding experience in organizations.

The power of metaphors has been asserted by a number of authors. Schein (1992) described "root metaphors" as one category of overt phenomena associated with organizational culture. Also described as integrating symbols, Schein said these are "the ideas, feelings, and images groups develop to characterize themselves that may or may not be appreciated consciously" (p. 10). Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, and Tipton (1991) proclaimed that "while we in concert with others create institutions, they also create us; they educate us and form us—especially through the socially enacted metaphors they give us, metaphors that provide normative interpretations of situations and action" (p. 12). McMillan and Cheney (1996) acknowledged that it can seem drastic to ascribe such power to metaphors but pointed out that we rely so heavily on metaphors that we often overlook their "powerful and practical role in our discourse" and that there is a "tendency to *become* what we *say we are*" (p. 2).

Metaphors, while capable of enriching our understandings, may also limit them as they can only capture partial and incomplete views. With this capacity for enrichment and limitation in mind, I propose that what students said during focus group discussions suggested four metaphors for the role of the student in the university. By role I mean students' views of themselves in relation to those in the university or to the university as an institution. This includes aspects such as their various reasons for engaging in university study and the status they hold in relation to others, especially their professors. I found such meaning to be frequently

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inferred but have no way of knowing whether these inferences were intentional or conscious. As with other findings and interpretations, not all students expressed the same meanings or, if they did, did not express them in the same way. However, taking the whole of the discussions together, I found that students situated themselves as subjects, as moral agents, as trainees, and as competitors in their learning environments (as shown in Figure 7.2). These metaphors do not represent mutually exclusive understandings and can overlap in their meanings. I explore each of these metaphors below.
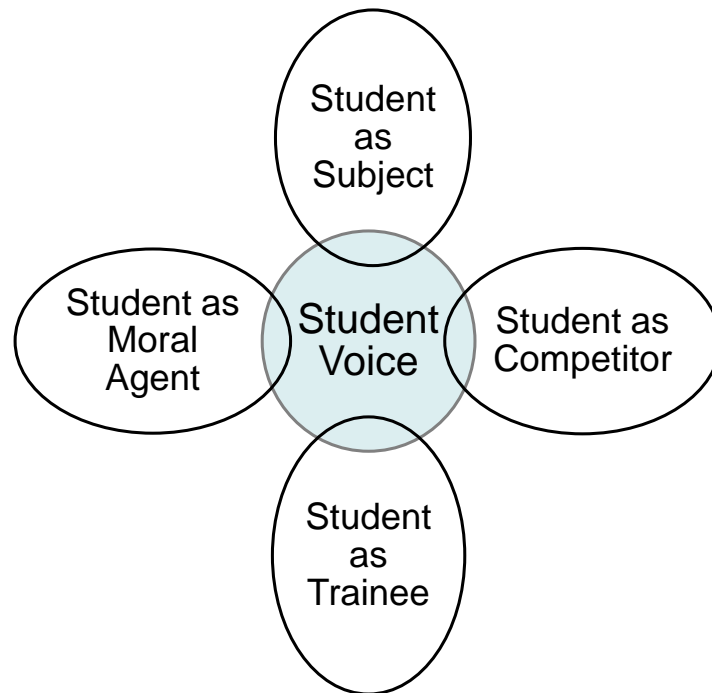

Figure 7.2 Four Metaphors for Students' Sense of Role in the University

The Student as Subject

      With the acknowledgement that a number of ways of viewing authority were exemplified in students' comments, taking all of the discussions and findings together, students' appeared to understand academic honesty and dishonesty as largely a matter falling under the direct authority

of their professors. Despite an apparent awareness that institutional level policies meant to define and govern matters of academic honesty and dishonesty existed at their universities, for students, professors' ultimately set the rules either explicitly or implicitly; professors decided whether to pursue their suspicions of academic dishonesty; and professors decided whether to take punitive or educative approaches to their encounters with students' academic dishonesty. Likelihoods of detection of academic dishonesty were also focused on the characteristics and contexts of professors in terms of class size, professor-student familiarity, nature of assignments, and professor's individual claims of diligence regarding academic dishonesty. Taking this view, for academic honesty and dishonesty students are under the control of their professors and are subject to their authority.

Students' attribution of authority to their professors meant they could also attribute blame to their professors. Even intent to be academically honest or dishonest which is presumably an internal matter of free choice, had deterministic undertones where some students found their professors and teachers, both past and present, at fault for not teaching the skills necessary for academic honesty thus making the occurrence of inadvertent plagiarism inevitable. Placing blame in such a way aligns with Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralization (reviewed in Chapter Two), where the technique of "denial of responsibility" was characterized as a claim that the wrongdoing was created by forces outside of the students' control and as "condemnation of the condemners" that shifts the focus to the behaviours of others who disapprove.

Understanding professors to hold such high levels of authority also means that students see their professors as powerful when it comes to matters of academic honesty and dishonesty. Such a view situates students as lacking power. I did not interpret students to feel overt powerlessness in relation to their professors, but they certainly expressed feelings of anxiety, vulnerability, and uncertainty about how their professors could respond to suspicions of academic dishonesty. Possibly in response to belief in their own subjugation to their professors were students that expressed frustration and some defiance. Examples, referenced earlier in the dissertation, were the discussion in one University of Saskatchewan group about whether one can remain committed to academic honesty when professors appear uncommitted and in a University of Alberta group where one student expressed her own feeling of being cheated by the institution and therefore not owing any authenticity in return. While comments of this nature were fewer in

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number that those indicating a general deference to the role of professors, they are consistent with the findings of other research that found students justifying academic dishonesty by treating the classroom as a reciprocal process (Graham et al., 1994), rebelling against disrespectful or unfair treatment (Ashworth et al., 1997), or a means to "evening things up" (Whitely & Keith-Spiegel, 2002). Even in such strong reactions to the role of their professors is the suggestion of their powerful role in comparison to the student and the status of subject. Students attributing such certainty to the definitions of academic honesty and dishonesty and such authority to their professors might indicate to cognitive-structural theorists, as noted earlier in this chapter, that students are at the earliest of the developmental stages of dualism (Perry, 1970), absolute knowing (Baxter-Magolda, 1990), or pre-reflective thinking (King & Kitchener, 1994). From each conceptualization, students understand knowledge as a matter of right or wrong, with little to no complexity acknowledged, and see authorities as having the answers.

The Student as Moral Agent

Students framed their understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty in ways that demonstrated they were aware that to be academically dishonest was to do wrong whether they conceived of it as a grave moral problem or as a fleeting moment of deviant behavior. One of the potential costs of academic dishonesty expressed by students was the compromise of personal integrity. Their future competence as teachers was also of concern and, as future teachers, students anticipated being obliged to do what was "right" by responding appropriately to academic dishonesty and by being honest and collaborative in their own work dedicated to achieving learning outcomes for children.

In particular, the principles of culpability derived from the elements that students' said were at the essence of academic dishonesty—intent to break known rules so as to gain an unearned grade advantage—position the student as a moral agent. That is, students were not to be treated as passive receptacles but as individuals who deliberate, judge, and act in accordance with their own understandings of the good. Even with the more pragmatic than moral tone of students in this study, the three necessary elements of moral agency identified by Boostrom (1998) in his discussion of the student as moral agent—choice, vision, and an end-in-view— were observable.

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For choice as an element necessary for moral agency, Boostrom asserted that "to be a moral agent, a person must have more than one course of action available, as well as both the authority and the competence to choose which course of action to follow" (p. 181). The fundamental importance of choice among alternatives was expressed by students in this study in terms of the requirement that rules be made known to students so that they know what is and is not permitted and so that they can develop competence in the required skills. Students expressed concern for inadvertent errors committed by students that reflected their ignorance, not their intent, and said such occurrences ought not to be thought of as academic dishonesty. For students facing academic honesty and dishonesty dilemmas, choice required full understanding of and competence in the rules.

Being merely aware of and understanding the rules are not sufficient on their own to assure moral agency. The student as moral agent must deliberate on the available choices and have insight into his or her situation. For Boostrom, this is called vision, and necessarily precedes choice in that "a person has to see a situation and understand the conditions before deliberating upon them" (p. 183). That is, to have vision, one must be aware of the world and the array of alternatives available. Students' analyses of situational risk associated with academic honesty and dishonesty exemplifies the kind of insight Boostrom has in mind in his conceptualization of vision. Students' attentiveness to the enticements and deterrents to academic dishonesty and likelihoods of unwanted outcomes (as presented in Chapter Five) suggest a capacity to consider an array of alternatives in some depth. The student as moral agent might have as his or her vision of the good that being assigned fair grades is good; becoming a competent teacher is good; and learning authentically is good. Said in other ways, the student as moral agent might say "I want to be deserving," or "I want to be skilled and knowledgeable," or "I want to be truthful."

Questions of academic honesty and dishonesty arise with regularity, it would seem, in student life. Boostrom pointed out that moral agency is not an activity separable from others but suggested that it is the "conscious experience of everyday life" (p. 185) and the greater one's awareness of the possibilities, the deeper the experience of moral agency. Seeing an end-in-view is to conceive of a desirable outcome, that is, the reason that a student comes to deliberate upon and choose from among alternatives. By far, the predominant outcome of concern for students in this study was the grades they would receive. Among the enticements and deterrents were some

more short-term, but desirable nonetheless, ends-in-view such as gaining efficiencies with one's time and effort. Of a more long-term nature was the motivation to enhance one's competitive standing in terms of grades to enhance one's life chances—two notions that connect to other views of students' roles in the university as trainees and as competitors.

The Student as Trainee

Almost all of the students in this study were in the final term of their Education degree programs and naturally were oriented to, if not pre-occupied with, their employment prospects and futures as teachers. While there were specific questions directed to their future roles as teachers, students frequently premised comments on other aspects of their understandings on their status as teacher candidates. Such a dual focus on the immediate concerns of being a student and a future vocational identity has, according to Batchelor (2006), long been the case in higher education.   She described the present, for students, to be "a temporary stage of apprenticeship, an antechamber for preparing and constructing the clearer definition and identity of the future, especially the vocational identity conferred by future employment" (p. 788). McCabe and Trevino (1996) in their review of research on matters of academic dishonesty has also found students to be increasingly focused on career goals and characterized them as highly credential-focused when they said that increasingly students "have come to college to get a credential—a credential that will allow them to pursue a chosen career. How they get that credential is often less important than simply getting it" (p. 29). A focus on professional preparation, potentially at the expense of considerations for academic honesty and dishonesty, was expressed by this student:

> I: I think for some people it isn't necessarily that they don't care [about other things in the university], it's that they see it as a means to an end—"I want to be a gym teacher, I want to be a shop teacher" (S3, 12)

When students expressed a high value placed on their own professional preparation they sometimes critically questioned aspects of their education. They expressed expectations that the education degree curriculum be designed to promote practical and applied learning outcomes. Likewise, they expected assignments and assessments to mirror actual requirements in the field and expected professors to have insights and advice to impart as a result of their own first-hand experience as teachers.

In this study, as in others (e.g. Park 2003, Ashworth et al., 1997), avoidance of irrelevant content was described as an enticement to academic dishonesty. If students believed what was being asked of them had no relation to the "real-world" of teaching, they didn't think the work was worth their time and effort. They would break the link between their acts and their consequences by rationalizing that what was being rewarded (such as lesson plans with sophisticated layouts) was not what would matter in their future careers as teachers and so they would not bother to either add that level of detail to their lesson plans, or presumably would be justified in copying such diagrams or formats from the work of others. When students, in various ways in discussions, questioned who would be hurt by some of the acts of academic dishonesty under consideration, they were engaging a technique of neutralization Sykes and Matza (1957) called "denial of injury." This kind of rationalization was most apparent when students suggested that it could be said that there was no harm in cheating in a course that was not a pre-requisite for some future course or was without application to their future careers.

Since university education has direct and indirect financial costs, it should not be surprising to find students treat their university education as an investment that inherently positions them as being in an exchange with the university. In Canada, certainly in the last decade, it has been common for universities to market undergraduate education as an investment that "pays off" for students with rewarding, economically beneficial careers upon graduation. Thus the student-as-trainee sees attendance at university as an investment in educational services as indicated by tuition fees and other associated costs that they view as part of an economic exchange. Inherent in the goal of accessing a chosen career path via university education is the goal of getting value for the money, time, and effort that students have invested in the educational enterprise. This student indicated that professionals in the field of education see their degree as a commodity when she reported: "One teacher told me point blank, 'do you realize you're buying your degree?'" (H, S2, 24). Another student complaining about how some professors use valuable classroom time to relate personal anecdotes positioned herself as the professor's employer, "That's nice, I'm paying you how much an hour to tell me your story" (O, A5, 5)? Emphasizing the notion of a fair exchange, students could rationalize their own academic dishonesty in terms of the dishonesty or unfairness perpetrated by their professors. In Sykes and Matza's (1957) terms, this is a technique called "denial of the victim" where students say that in light of the circumstances, academic dishonesty is a fair response to an individual or

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to a more abstract victim, like the university itself. Examples of professors' failures that could justify future academic dishonesty from this view could include exams that do not ask what students were told to expect, flexibility for others on deadlines that students thought were firm, or content that students regard as irrelevant to their futures.

The Student as Competitor

Students' said they compete against one another for grades and thereby positioned themselves as competitors sometimes positioning their fellow students as rivals for educational opportunity and achievement. Students described striving to get a relative advantage compared with others for access to scarce resources like scholarships, scarce positions in selective educational programs, or to be hired by desirable employers. There were numerous comments from students about the competitive climate they perceived in their learning environment.

Students talked about knowing that they were in competition with their peers because of the realities of grades as a primary criterion for admission to competitive degree programs and the kinds of time and grade pressure they feel in this regard were described in Chapter Five. This student comment suggested that university is like a race between students and grades are like the carrots students are reaching for, as per the image of a proverbial donkey moving towards the unattainable, "It's like a carrot dangling in front of you. And everybody's at a race and whether or not your carrot is big enough will tell you how far you'll go" (G, UofS 1, 29). Another student indicated that the competition among students' peers was intense when he said "But you try to find every possible way, just to get that one extra mark on your assignment. Whatever advantage you can get over the others" (M, UofA 4,12).

Discussion that occurred in the University of Alberta focus groups about use of the "curve" as a sorting and ranking mechanism for the assignment of grades was particularly rich in its positioning students as competitors with one another. Understanding themselves as competitors is what would allow students to rationalize academic dishonesty as necessary to achieve a goal beyond academic honesty in the short term. Sykes and Matza called this technique of neutralization where a student would say he or she had to cheat to get ahead an "appeal to higher loyalties" where one value overrides another, in this case, personal advancement trumps academic honesty. It was this more important need to succeed that students said could cause students to be willing to either take the risks associated with academic dishonesty or to compromise their own learning or integrity.

Implications of the Findings

The discovery of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty achieved in the context of this study has provided me with insights that suggest a number of potential implications both for policy and practice as well as for research. Since aspects of academic honesty and dishonesty exist within administrative practices and policies of individual faculty, of departments, of colleges or faculties, and of institutions writ large, the understandings revealed through this study have proven multi-faceted and to exist at multiple levels. Included in this section are implications for higher education policy, for communication of policy, for instructional practices, for administrative practices, and for research methods. Each is discussed under respective headings in this section of the chapter.

Implications for Higher Education Policy

Academic integrity is important to universities because it speaks to what must be a core mission of most if not all institutions of higher education, the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Specifically, the notion of academic integrity is about the means to achieving this end and thereby requires an answer to the question: Has this *knowledge* been created and disseminated in the way it should? Following from this question is a secondary one: Are the rewards for this creation and dissemination being justly distributed? These are questions of policy as universities clearly require an overarching standard to be articulated that serves group interests and individual interests. Different constituencies of a university will refine these overarching questions in ways particular to their interests and goals, the problems they have experienced in relation to those goals, and the solutions they can imagine. But, for the senior undergraduate Education students in this study, concerns for academic integrity take a more narrow form and can be reduced to a single question: *Is a grade deserved?*

Grades appear to be the currency of the learning environment for students. While they may represent the quantity and quality of learning in some way, for students in this study they were rarely an end in themselves but had utility as a means to achieving other goals. That is, passing grades minimally allow students to continue to work toward a chosen credential and eventually be awarded the credential and gain the accompanying rights and privileges. But, students know that better grades often lead to better opportunities such as scholarships, admission to selective programs, and improved job prospects. Grades have value. Good grades

are a scarce resource for which students compete. As a result, students place great importance on the validity and fairness of the awarding of grades.

Thus, for students, the problem of academic honesty is a problem of not getting the grades students deserve relative to each other. The question of whether a grade is deserved can be further broken down into two sub-questions: *Who did this academic work?* and *Under what conditions was the academic work done?* Implied are two problems that an academic integrity policy should address: (1) misrepresentations of authorship, and (2) unfair comparisons of academic work. Authorship is misrepresented in cases where students submit writing or answers as though they had generated them when in fact they have not. One example is students inserting sections of text from web sites without referencing the source. Another example is the copying of answers to multiple choice questions from the paper of another student during an exam. Fair comparison of academic work comes into question when students do not complete their work under the same conditions and thereby their work cannot be fairly judged and ranked. The "playing field is not even" to borrow a metaphor from sport competition, when for example, students gain an advantage by using fraudulent reasons to gain extensions or deferrals and thereby have more time than others to complete academic work or to study.

The findings of this study suggest that solutions to the problem of undeserved grades and the instruments to achieve the goal of valid and fair assessments lie in the policies enacted at the level of the classroom and under the authority of the professor. Too much variation exists within the institution to have one policy. Students believe professors ought to explicitly set the rules and ensure students understand them and know how to follow them. If students do not know how to follow the rules, professors should take an educative rather than punitive approach. If they encounter confirmed academic dishonesty where known rules have been intentionally broken in an effort to gain a grade advantage, professors should apply penalties or enact whatever punitive process exists. Students see the solution to undeserved grades gained through academic dishonesty to be in the prevue of their professors.

Given this extrapolation of policy goals, questions, and solutions that students would emphasize in policy-making, students see academic integrity policies as being more narrow in purpose than they usually are in universities. (There may also be pedagogical and curricular questions to be asked about students' emphasis on grades that I have treated as out of the scope of the present study.) Regardless of the broader importance of academic integrity in the work of

universities, if those designing new or refining existing policies want to meet students' policy needs when it comes to academic honesty and dishonesty, the findings of this study suggest that policies must present standards and processes for how concerns for deserved grades will be addressed and fairness ensured. Including students on policy-making committees is an obvious recommendation. Students are, however, known to be included on committees in token ways in that they are a distinct minority or are ill-equipped to voice the needs of the broader community or, sometimes, committees fail to be open to and then respond to that voice. Committees should consider testing the comprehension and interpretation of students of the definitions, the principles, the processes, and the penalties outlined in policies. Also of value to policy-makers would be exploration of students' perceptions as to the focus of the policies and their opinions on the likelihood of reduced instances of academic dishonesty in their day-to-day worlds. Recommendations for approaches and methods for accessing the student voice and students' understandings are made later in this chapter.

Implications for Communication of Policy

The senior Education students participating in this study saw their universities as complex and multi-faceted, containing subgroups of people—a view consistent with that of many higher education scholars, as emphasized in this statement by Kuh and Whitt (1998):

> Large public, multipurpose universities are comprised of many different groups whose members may or may not share or abide by all of the institution's norms, values, practices, beliefs, and meanings. Instead of viewing colleges and universities as monolithic entities (Martin & Siehl, 1983), it is more realistic to analyze them as multicultural contexts (March & Simon, 1958; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984) that are host to numerous subgroups with different priorities, traditions, and values (Gregory, 1983). (p. 11)

Students, reflecting on four years or more of university level study in most cases, recognized disciplinary differences in matters of academic honesty and dishonesty. They contrasted what they experienced or understood to be the norms in their Education degree programs to what they had experienced in university prior to entering Education or to what they had experienced in courses offered outside of their Education programs. They attributed some of the differences in norms for academic honesty and dishonesty to disciplinary differences such as the curricular content, the approach to evaluation, the varying threats of detection and punishment for dishonesty, and the role of grades in the future prospects of the students. While students did not

use the term subculture, they spoke of the influence of norms, values, practices, beliefs and assumptions on the behaviour of individuals, both students and professors, in a particular group.

Students in this study recognized that their university was a place where there were many ways of being, many ways of behaving, and varying expectations and standards. When talking about how they came to learn the rules themselves as well as the norms for actual behaviour regarding academic honesty and dishonesty, most seemed to have had the experience of learning indirectly from friends, picking up on the group norms via hearsay or incidental observations, or from feedback of various kinds from professors. Rather than passive forms of communication such as websites or policy documents, the sources of learning and communication identified by students were in an active form. Cultures and subcultures may form in such a setting because, as Kuh and Whitt (1998) wrote:

> If a group of people have shared a significant number of important experiences in responding to problems imposed by the external environment or by internal conflicts, such common experiences will probably encourage the group to develop a similar view of the institution and their place in it. (p. 49)

Students appeared to use this sense of subculture as theorists about subculture would anticipate—as a frame of reference for interpreting matters of academic honesty and dishonesty (Kuh & Whitt, 1998) and to make their "own behaviour sensible and meaningful" (Morgan, 1986, p. 128).

If the view of this student subgroup of senior undergraduate Education students that students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty differ based on their experiences in disciplinary areas is to be accepted, a number of implications are suggested. At an institutional level, it follows that that policies and practices for matters of academic honesty and dishonesty, need to consider multiple contexts and the concerns of multiple student and professor audiences. An approach to educating students on academic honesty and dishonesty that recognized disciplinary differences and acknowledged these as indicating the existence of subcultures relating to academic dishonesty, would first and foremost take a systematic approach across the institution but would offer specific and refined educational messages to reflect the student subculture and discipline and the climate for academic dishonesty in the subculture of students. Interviews with the policy administrators at each of the two universities in which the students participating in this study were enrolled provided confirmation that institutional level policies

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exist as a guide that all faculty and students are expected to follow. But, at the same time, different colleges or faculties or departments or individual professors were known to explain and promote and emphasize and enforce the policy in different ways.   While there may be some inherent risks in such decentralization of concerns for academic dishonesty, with the complexity and size of university, it is only practical to do so to some degree.

Since the sample for this study was Education students, the insight about subculture has the potential to inform practices and policies in Education programs in particular. Professors, deans, and associate and assistant deans, chairs of academic dishonesty hearing committees, should recognize that since most Education students' views about academic honesty and dishonesty have been formed in undergraduate experiences in other disciplines or fields of study, that it is advisable that an orientation to the new academic culture and standards of academic honesty be performed at the beginning of students' tenure in the Education degree program. If the belief expressed by several students in this study holds—that being in Education suggests a higher commitment to academic honesty and value placed on authentic learning among students—such an orientation would be an opportunity beyond inculcating students into the academic culture and academic honesty standards but also into the professional culture of teaching

Implications for Instructional Practices

As has been explored earlier, students regard professors as the source of authority for academic honesty and dishonesty. They expect them to set and enforce the rules that determine whether an act is academic honesty or dishonesty. Previous research has found (e.g., Nuss, 1984, Jendrek, 1989, McCabe 1993, Graham et al., 1994) and findings in this study suggest that professors are known to fail to execute this "role responsibility" and thereby fail in their professional obligation (Smith, 1996, p. 13). Because numerous variables in addition to particular professor behaviours are known to influence cheating, "faculty responsibility is often obscured or diffused," according to Parameswaran and Devi (2006, p. 264). Whether professors want to explicitly accept the authority students in this study would assign to them or not, students will seek to uncover individual standards for academic honesty in what their professors say and do. Simply by virtue of having the role of professor in students' lives, they hold authority and will transmit their own personal values, that of their part of the university, and their scholarly

community. A number of implications for instructional practices follow from this role of the professor in students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty.

Professors can do more to claim their authority regarding academic honesty and dishonesty. Students do not appear to understand the role of academic integrity in the university, in the creation and dissemination of knowledge, or in their own fields of study. This is most apparent in concerns for plagiarism where students appear more likely to see the rules of referencing as arbitrary commands. Students might come to understand referencing conventions and their role much differently if they understood their role in scholarly endeavors more broadly. Offering such explanations could serve to foster moral will among students meaning students develop a desire to act in accordance with ethical principles (Bok, 2006).

On a more practical level, students' emphasis on the existence of rules as a defining characteristic of academic dishonesty suggests that individual professors should be in the practice of explicitly stating their expectations and that institutions should have guiding policies. Students' appeared to be calling on their professors and their programs to establish consistent practices and policies in this regard. Professors need to understand what many students believe is at stake in their lives when it comes to grades. While the currency of grades is unlikely to be something affected at a classroom level, impacting students' sense of the likelihood of negative outcomes for cheating is possible. Professors claims of commitment to academic honesty and observed approaches to ensuring it are of vital importance to students' sense of risk. Some approaches were suggested by students such as professors ought to: (1) clearly articulate all the rules and assumptions related to the means for completion of academic work, (2) position themselves as someone who will take responsibility for advising them on how to follow the rules as well as someone who will enforce them, and (3) explain the conditions, if any, under which the rules may be altered, for example, an extension to a deadline.

The importance of helping students to appreciate the relevance of the content and the reasons to learn it honestly is also implied in the findings of this study. Students appear to want to obtain real benefits from their education and often find themselves unable to grasp the value of what they are being asked to learn.

Implications for Administrative Practices

As was acknowledged in the first chapter, my overarching interest in conducting this study was to learn about the nature of a chosen phenomenon in which what institutions of higher

education *want* the student experience to be and what the experience *is* for students appears to differ. The prevalence of academic dishonesty in higher education reported in the research literature appeared to present the kind of discrepancy I was interested in since presumably such behaviours are anathema to the values of academic integrity fundamental to the mission of higher education. That is, wide spread academic dishonesty on the part of students must certainly be an experience that those working in higher education institutions do *not* want students to have.

Based on the data collected in the present study, only the most tentative of statements can be made about the findings as related to the culture or climate for academic honesty and dishonesty among students. Students in this study described perceptions that they said were shared among their peers to be: (1) a belief that students recognize that academic dishonesty occurs in their learning environment, and that (2) engaging in academic dishonesty presents risk to students. Within these perceptions were the somewhat paradoxical views among students that academic dishonesty is an affront to fair competition for grades while also a sometimes justifiable coping mechanism or success strategy. Many students did not appear to completely rule out academic dishonesty as a way to cope or as a strategy to succeed.

I characterize much of what students described as their own and their professors' behaviours related to academic honesty and dishonesty as occurring "under the radar." For example, students believed that faculty often dealt with suspicions of academic dishonesty outside of official policies, using their own discretion about the severity of the offence or intent of the offender, and proceeding with their own educative or punitive measures. They also believed that some professors do not notice or do not care about possible violations and suggested that little to nothing could be done about such failures. Suggested in these beliefs about their learning environment are indications that matters of academic honesty and dishonesty, including enforcement, are not closely monitored.   Victor and Cullen (1988) pointed out, that it is where activities cannot be closely monitored that, "shared norms and values become the dominant culture control mechanism, replacing rules and procedures" (p. 121). Reliance on norms and values aligns with findings of a number of studies (e.g., McCabe & Trevino, 1993; McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 1999, Hendershott, Drinan, & Cross, 2000) that it is characteristics of campus culture or climate that appear to have the most impact on student behavior related to academic honesty and dishonesty.

Organizational climate is a multi-dimensional concept (Victor & Cullen, 1988) requiring a target or focus, that is, a climate for *what*? (Schneider, Bowen, Ehrhart & Holcombe, 2000). An ethical climate, for example, could be described as the "shared perceptions of what is ethically correct behavior and how ethical issues should be handled" (Victor & Cullen, 1987, p. 52). Here, I refine the above to offer a two-pronged definition of a *climate for student academic honesty and dishonesty: A climate for student academic honesty and dishonesty is indicated by the shared perceptions students have about: (1) what defines academic honesty and dishonesty, and (2) what approaches others use when faced with dilemmas about academic honesty and dishonesty.* In this definition, "others" may include other students, professors, department or college or faculty leaders, hearing panels, and policy committees, to name a few. It is the extent to which there is agreement about a definition and consensus about the existence of normative patterns that allow it to be said that a climate for student academic honesty and dishonesty does or does not exist.

In his discussion of student retention and college climate, Baird (2000) favoured the view that students' appraisals of their environments play a central role in students' coping and adaptation efforts. According to Cole and Conklin (1996), it is the "little things" that make a difference in how students learn what is acceptable in their environment:

> A college or university campus is a complex environment and resistant to change, especially if imposed from above. We learn best from the small signals that come in our daily interactions with fellow-students and colleagues. In particular, students learn what is acceptable and not acceptable, what is valued and not valued, through talking to other students, interacting with faculty and administrators, and participating in their various sub-cultures. Students will understand and accept responsibility for the conduct of others as well as themselves only when all the campus "signals" are sending this message from presidents welcoming freshmen to faculty talking with students and advisors with advisees, to students talking to each other at midnight in a residence hall corridor." (p. 38)

Baird regarded understanding these perceptions—how they are formed and what common elements or dimensions exist—as most important in understanding climate.

If it is the case that in most universities academic dishonesty rates exceed an acceptable level and administrators at all levels would agree that academic dishonesty is a problem, then change strategies ought to include attention to the climate for students' academic honesty and

dishonesty. Affecting the climate requires accessing students' points of view to understand, at least from one set of campus community members, what exactly the current status is regarding the phenomenon. From there, change leaders can begin to determine what it is that needs to change and proceed in moving towards that preferred future state of understanding and experience among students.

Implications for Research

In this section I present implications for research in terms of a model for future inquiries into the student voice and methods as well as questions and directions deserving of additional research attention.

Model for the Discernment of the Student Voice

I did not find an established conceptualization of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty in higher education upon which to frame this study. Driven by the purpose and research questions, I conceptualized the discovery of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty to require that I, as the researcher, directly access the student voice. To access the student voice, it is necessary to listen and seek to understand the meaning that is conveyed by students about what they experience as students. Batchelor (2006) explained the necessity of accessing the student voice in this way:

> Having a voice partly depends on someone hearing that voice with understanding, and coaching it forth. Certain qualities in listening, and listeners, increase the chances of recovering vulnerable student voices. Giving attention and demonstrating tolerance are both central to strategies for recovering student voices that are vulnerable, in both the positive and negative sense of vulnerability. (p. 799)

It is important to recognize the relative powerlessness of the student voice in universities. From the administrative perspective, the "strength and confidence of the institutional voice—however well-intentioned that voice—can overpower more tentative individual student voices, make it harder for them to be heard" (Batchelor, 2006, p. 795). Prudent students will conclude that it is more beneficial to align themselves with the institutional or mainstream voice and suppress their own voices.

As a result of conducting this study, I have conceptualized a model of discernment of the student voice that I believe has utility for educational administration, scholars and professionals. The student voice is defined as a metaphor for the meaning that is conveyed by students when

they verbally describe to others what it is like to understand their educational experiences in the ways that they do. The meaning conveyed is taken at face-value and treated as being of inherent value regardless of its content. Two main assumptions underlie the model. First, it is assumed that the phenomenon in question is one that appears to be of concern or interest to a group of students and presents, for them, an engaging dilemma or paradox of some kind. Second, it is assumed that students will express themselves more fully and more freely on the chosen topic in discussion with peers than in other settings or using other formats. With this definition of the student voice and assumptions in place, I propose the model of inquiry depicted in Figure 7.2 as a tool for future research.

Propose New or Improved
Understandings

⇕

Describe and Integrate Findings

⇕

Intensify and Enrich Ideas

⇕

Connect and Contrast Meanings

⇕

Listen and Wonder without
Judgment

↑

Access Meanings

↑

Invite Students

A student concern appearing to be
most freely and richly explored in a
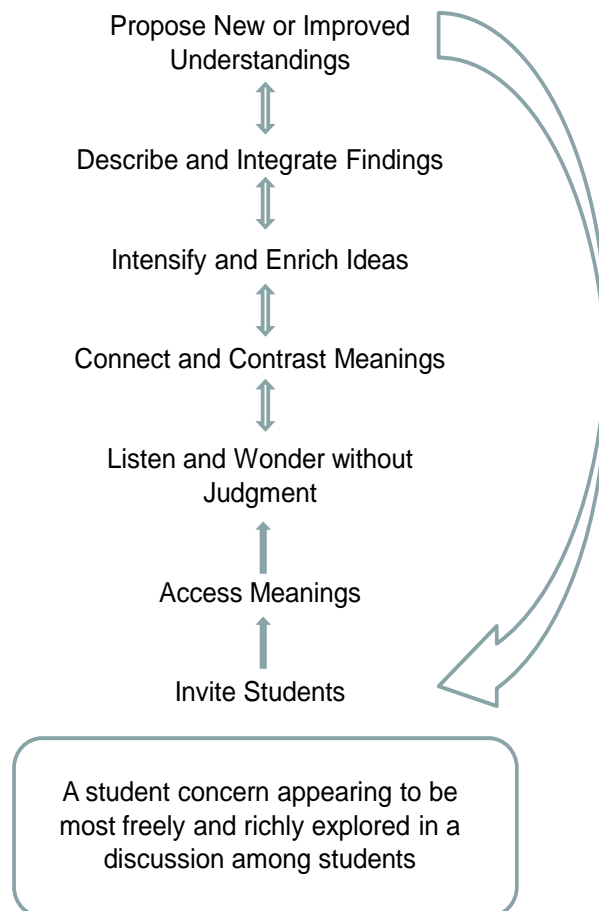discussion among students

Figure 7.3 A model for discernment of the student voice

This model is founded on the assumptions identified above and to have the potential to loop back internally at several stages and then to return to students, possibly for their confirmation, rejection, or enrichment of the proposed new or improved understandings. To indicate the groundedness of the model in the student voice, the process moves upward but with the potential for elements to overlap or to loop back. The idea is that the researcher may be in two stages at the same time in the inquiry process. Elements of the model are expanded upon below:

1. Invite students to volunteer their experiences and perspectives. Appeal to students personal and community interests in seeking to be understood and, where needed, to be catalysts for change. Ensure that there is no potential for negative repercussions to befall students for their contribution. Establish reasonable assurances of confidentiality recognizing its limits in group settings. Accurately describe the intent and approach to be used in the discussions, including the independence of the facilitator. On a practical level, entice student participation through food and comfortable surroundings. Convenience of location along with convenience in terms of time pressures and other commitments are important considerations.

2. Create the conditions for accessing the authentic and core meanings of students' experiences. Ensure that what students experience when they come together for the discussion is what was promised in the invitation to participate. Ensure that the facilitator both appears and is independent of the issue and can take an open, accepting, non-judging approach. Ensure students are aware of the opportunity to withdraw from the process at any time. Provide questions or prompts that depict the dilemma or paradox in a manner that may be familiar on some level to students and therefore can generate comments, discussions, or debates that provide some richness.

3. Listen to and wonder about the student voice without judgment. In the course of facilitation and in early analysis seek to, as purely as possible, learn about the experiences of students free of previous notions or judgments about the phenomenon or about students themselves. Consciously limit presupposition, to the extent that this is possible.

4. Connect and contrast student meanings. Look for the ways in which students appear to hold common or differing views as individuals and by groupings. Develop a rubric to assist in that analysis.

5. Intensify or enrich the findings using outside expertise. Review the research in the field on the emergent themes. Consider returning to the original students for their assessment of initial analysis and integration of findings and consider engaging others with expertise in the topic for their interpretations.

6. Describe and integrate findings. Summarize the experiences as expressed by students, separately presenting possible meanings or insights that can be gained.

7. Propose new or improved understandings. Included may be new notions, conceptualizations, interventions, and approaches. Search out relevant models of best practice and introduce them into the setting of students' life world. A return to original groups with integrated findings and ideas for future approaches is possible.

Engaging outside reviewers and returning to original student participants were not methods used in the present study, but I suggest that their inclusion would have proved valuable and recommend these approaches for future studies of this kind.

Future Methodologies

Because I believed I could only achieve the purpose of this study—to discover senior Education students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty—by accessing the detailed insight that students alone hold about their lived experience of understanding academic honesty and dishonesty, I conducted the study from within the qualitative or naturalistic paradigm. Studies with similar purposes to the one described in this dissertation are likely to also find this the best methodological fit. Below are specific reflections and recommendations on the methods for data collection and analysis employed in this study.

Data collection. Key features of the data collection methods used in this study were the choice of population and site and the choice to use focus groups. Each is discussed in this section.

Senior undergraduate Education students at two universities, the University of Alberta and the University of Saskatchewan, were the population for this study. The choice to include students from two institutions provided benefits and challenges. As noted earlier, there was little difference noted between the two groups except on the topic of the use of the "curve" which was discussed in each of the focus groups conducted at the University of Alberta and was not discussed by students at the University of Saskatchewan. Restricting the study to one program area and two universities was an appropriate choice for the purpose of the study and for the

scope of the doctoral dissertation. The assumptions appeared confirmed that students studying in the same field at different universities would express similar view points about their similar curriculum, similar professional path and would experience a similar academic culture of their professors. Focusing students in a single degree program did result in fewer variables that were extraneous to the purpose of the study. Challenges of the method were the increased time and attention required to engage students from two universities in two cities as well as the need to work with the ethics approval process of a second university.

Focus groups proved a highly successful means of accessing the student voice and collecting the data that allowed me to achieve the purpose of the study. In the context of the focus groups themselves, a common language, understanding, and experience allowed more depth of discussion. Further, I believe that much more conceptual ground was covered in a one hour session because the students were in the same program. The students' discussions included reflections on the nature of assessment, teacher/faculty responsibility, the educational process and the students used the language of the field of education. Researchers of students' views in universities who want to use a similar method should consider the value of piloting their methods with Education students because of their advanced insights into educational processes.

It is noteworthy that students did not always agree with one another's placement or analyses of the scenarios they were asked to place on an imaginary continuum of academic honesty and dishonesty as a warm-up activity. While this activity may have sensitized participants to others' understandings, diverse opinions continued to be respectfully expressed in the later discussions. Since I expected diverse views would exist and was concerned about conformity to "correct" answers, the apparent comfort with which students expressed varying views suggested that discussions were authentic and did not tend toward an unnatural level of conformity. While there were admissions of academic dishonesty among the participants during the focus groups, they were minor offences in comparison to what they had reported a "friend" had done or what they had heard through the student grapevine to have occurred. And, there were some occasions when students did express a view that was extreme in comparison to others and this may have served to polarize discussion for a time.

Given the sensitive nature of a topic such as academic dishonesty, it was possible that students limited the expression of views to those they believed would be acceptable to their peers and to me as the researcher. A concern for such a lack of authenticity of expression is consistent

with Goffman's (1959) assertion that we each deliver tailored performances of sorts when we present ourselves to others. He likely would have cautioned that conformity to external values, or "lip-service" to ideals of academic integrity, would be likely in a discussion of this type among students and would yield a "veneer of consensus" that would not fully present students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty (p. 20). In focus groups, there can be a concern for tendency toward conformity in which some participants withhold things that they might say in private, but likewise, there can also be a tendency toward polarization in which some participants express more extreme views in a group than in private (Morgan, 1997). I speculate that there is some evidence of both of these tendencies in the focus group data gathered for this study.

The benefit of gaining further depth of discussion and analysis by students in a focus group setting was notable in comparison with the three individual interviews that were held with students but had to be excluded from the final data set. I observed that the students seemed to feel far more comfortable discussing issues of academic honesty and dishonesty with other students in my presence than did those who spoke with me individually. In my experience of conducting this study, students in groups were more frank and willing to share fairly revealing stories, including stories of their own possible wrongdoing.

As was described previously, it proved more difficult to get volunteers to participate in this study than I had expected. As had occurred at the University of Saskatchewan, professors of classes in which I was making announcements seemed to expect more interest by their students, saying things like "they're a good class" or "they're good students." It seemed to me that they felt surprised and apologetic when my turn-out was not as great as they had expected.

With the concerns and challenges acknowledged, in retrospect, the focus groups struck me as candid and natural and as the right choice of data collection method for this study. However, even with this confidence that students were largely forthcoming and truthful, I cannot know the degree to which they may have censored or tailored their perspectives to match what they thought would be socially acceptable in the setting.

Data analysis. To analyze the data, I conducted content analysis over what turned out to be four years and while the timeframe was extended for reasons unrelated to the study itself, it is likely that the extended timeframe allowed a more mature and refined result. For me, data analysis was an experience of circling and testing the logic of my interpretations and

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representations of students' voice. Connecting the multitude of ideas I noticed in the data in an efficient and readable manner proved challenging sometimes leaving me wondering if the reader wasn't better off to simply read the transcripts and listen to the tapes! However, a few modest breakthroughs kept me hopeful.

In the case of the excluded interview and focus group transcripts, I did review them for any unique points of view and while it is regrettable that the rich and insightful comments provided by these students were unusable, the findings of the study would have been generally the same.

Future Research Questions

As the purpose of this study was to discover students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty—specifically, the content, structure, and future applications of their understandings—the discoveries of these led me to new questions about the nature of this phenomenon. Many of these questions represent tantalizing lines of interpretation and additional analysis that had to be foregone in the present study in an effort to adhere to the original purpose of this study and to maintain its scope and size. I organize the questions meriting further research to align with how the findings themselves were presented. So as not to be repetitive in the listing, the variations based on alternative populations of students are noted under a separate sub heading.

Questions of content. Future questions stemming from the findings related to the substantive content of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty include:

1. How do students, professors, and/or policy-makers react to the definition of academic dishonesty derived from the findings of this study?

2. What role does the notion of intent play in (a) professors' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty, (b) in university or unit level policies, (c) in deliberations of hearing boards? How does this compare to students' understanding of the role of intent in academic honesty and dishonesty?

3. How do students learn the rules of academic honesty and dishonesty that apply to their academic work?

4. What do students believe the role of referencing conventions is in academic work?

5. What are the most effective ways for students to gain the competence necessary to follow the rules of academic dishonesty, especially as relates to matters of plagiarism?

Questions of structure. Based on the structures of understandings discovered in this study, the following questions would be of interest in future research:

1. How do students, professors, and/or policy-makers react to the framework for situational risk analysis derived from the findings of this study?

2. What relationships do professors see between class size, student-faculty familiarity, nature of assignments, and public commitment to the (a) detection of academic dishonesty, and (b) the punishment of academic dishonesty? What other variables do professors identify as playing a role in the likelihood they will detect and follow up on suspicions of academic dishonesty?

3. How do professors understand and/or react to their suspicions of academic dishonesty among students?

Questions of applications. The following questions are worthy of future research attention, some of them focused on verification of students' expectations for teaching and professionalism found in this study:

1. How do professors and/or practicing K to 12 teachers react to students' anticipated rules for teacher integrity derived from the findings of this study?

2. How accurate are students' expectations for teaching related to academic honesty and dishonesty once they are practicing K to 12 teachers?

3. How do professors and/or K to 12 teachers balance flexibility and fairness and concerns for academic dishonesty when dealing with requests for extensions or deferrals or other special accommodations?

4. What are the perspectives of K to 12 teachers on matters of authorship and/or collaboration in their professional lives?

5. Do students who self-report having been academically dishonest during their education degrees self-report other kinds of dishonesty or ethical breaches as practicing K to 12 teachers?

Alternate Populations

In all of the above questions and for the research questions that guided this study, students at different stages in their academic careers could be studied as could students in different programs or in different institutions. In this study, I focused on senior Education undergraduate students from two western Canadian universities. Replication of this study with

students from other program areas, other universities, and at different stages in their academic careers would serve to test the conceptualization of students' understanding of academic honesty and dishonesty that I have proposed. Likewise, students with different characteristics hypothesized to potentially impact the ways they understand academic honesty and dishonesty could be studied. Some examples are:

1. students who speak English as an additional language
2. students who have been previously found guilty of academic dishonesty
3. students who have been previously charged but found not guilty of academic dishonesty
4. mature students
5. graduate students
6. international students
7. students who receive disability-related accommodations
8. students from a non-dominant cultural group such as Aboriginal students
9. students from diverse religious backgrounds
10. students who are first-generation university-attenders
11. students whose parents attended university
12. students who have previously experienced academic failure
13. students who are high academic achievers
14. students who are pursuing highly selective academic programs
15. students whose academic achievement impacts the maintenance of scholarships or other forms of funding
16. students with higher than average work, family, or extracurricular commitments
17. students who live in residence

While the above listing is somewhat lengthy, it is not exhaustive. Because student bodies are becoming more diverse in Canadian universities, we ought not treat our students as though they are homogeneous. It is increasingly important that we consider appropriate segmenting of the student body into sub-groups reflective of the issues of interest in higher education research and institutional assessment efforts. The benefits to doing so include not only the distinctive data sets that result, but done appropriately, such segmentation improves access to the student voice and insight into the experience of students. For example, students who experience suspicions or accusations of plagiarism as a form of racism or intimidation are more likely to discuss such an

experience in the presence of others who may understand why this would be and how such an event would be experienced. Further, by addressing student concerns as potentially unique or special, it can also serve to acknowledge and respect differences. Care must be taken, however, that students perceive the interest as credible rather than token.

Alternate Sites

This study was conducted at two universities. Few studies of a similar nature to that described in this dissertation have been conducted at more than one institution. Very few differences were noted in what students had to say about their universities or about academic honesty and dishonesty, with the exception noted earlier about the notion of being graded "on the curve" being present in University of Alberta discussions and being absent in University of Saskatchewan discussions. While convenience factors influenced the selection of these two universities in the present study, their selection had other merits.

In our Canadian context, the universities involved in this study should be thought of as relatively similar. While the University of Alberta is one of the largest universities in Canada and the University of Saskatchewan is mid-sized, both are regarded as medical-doctoral universities with robust research mandates. I expect that leaders at both institutions find themselves operating in increasingly varied and complex financial environments making student enrollments of strategic concern. In such a context, reputation and public relations must be of paramount importance and the experience of students must hold significant sway. As with matters of trust more broadly, it can take years or decades to build credibility with stakeholders and a single event to destroy it. Matters of academic dishonesty have been fodder for public relations nightmares, likely for centuries, it appears that other concerns for how students conduct themselves, what they actually learn at university, and what the outcomes are of their enrollment are of growing public interest. On this basis, similar studies to the one described herein could be undertaken at any higher education institution in Canada—and perhaps across the entire educational sector.

Future Directions

As has been noted earlier in this dissertation, the phenomenon of students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty was chosen as the focus of this study because it represented an area of concern in higher education where the experience universities want for their students—in this case that of academic honesty—is reported both in research and

anecdotally to frequently not be the experience students have in our universities. Given that the design of the current study proved fruitful for the purpose of this study other phenomenon or topics of similar concern for students and universities could find this same approach beneficial. For example, students experience with ancillary services such as parking, food services, or textbook pricing, has been a perennial problem area on many campuses. Often despite use of tools such as mass surveys and well-thought out efforts to respond to feedback, concerns persist in many cases for students. For service leaders the knowledge they need may be accessible to them in the free flowing discussion with a small group of students who can describe what it is they experience and what satisfaction of their needs and fulfillment of their expectations would look like. Of a more sensitive and ultimately much more serious nature are matters of discrimination or intimidation that select groups of students experience. Concern for both the overt and covert racism that Aboriginal students experience in our universities might be better addressed through a deeper level understanding of the perspectives of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and those of professors, service-providers, and administrators alike. There could be similar value in an exploration of heterosexism and intimidation and threats to personal safety that students experience on our campuses based on sexual orientation or identity. Another potential topic lies in the complexity and competing demands that must be part of the experience that increasing numbers of students are having as they work 20 or more hours per week while pursuing full or near to full time university studies. Or, students requiring accommodation of religious practice in order to even attend university would surely have informative stories to share and needs that must be urgently met for both moral and legal reasons. The list of enduring and emerging issues of concern for students and universities could certainly be lengthened. The point here is that too often we as educators and administrators assume we know the answers to students' concerns when we, in fact, do not understand the complex nature of their concerns in any depth. It is my intent that the present study serve as a model for research that aims to access the understandings of students.

Chapter and Dissertation Summary

Motivated by my interest in discrepancies between what higher education institutions *want* the experience of students to be and what *actually isfg* for students, and the apparent problem of academic dishonesty, I conceived the purpose of this study to be to discover senior Education students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty and addressed questions

of the substance of students' understandings, the structures in use in their understandings, and the particular applications students' projected for their future as teachers. I aimed to discover students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty in a manner truly reflective of the voice of students and employed methods known to facilitate that level of depth and insight. As a result of my choice of purpose, questions, and method, the findings are largely descriptive of the meanings expressed by students. Interpretations and extrapolations of what was said by students led me to propose meanings of relevance at both conceptual and practical levels. In this, the final chapter, the findings described in the three analysis chapters were integrated to form a holistic view of the students' understandings that were discovered. The discussion centred on the extent to which students' vision of a system for academic honesty could be said to be a moral system and on the ways students see themselves in the university and how such a view relates to matters of academic honesty and dishonesty. In the second half of the chapter, implications for higher education policies, practices and research were presented. These included ways to incorporate and respond to students' understandings as well as recommendations for a model for discernment of the student voice, research methodology, and future directions and questions of interest for research in this or a similar area of interest.

A Final Comment

Conducting the study described in this dissertation has been an endeavor of several years requiring both commitment and endurance. Despite my own starts and stops, consistent throughout has been my deep appreciation and admiration for the students who engaged in candid and rich discussions about a subject that many would find sensitive if not uncomfortable. I remain concerned for the apparent prevalence of academic dishonesty among university students and the uncertainty, pressures, and motivations that may lead them, either intentionally or inadvertently, to engage in it. It is my opinion that those of us in various roles in universities must engage students in thoughtful reflection and analysis of the dilemmas of academic dishonesty they face as one approach to fostering their development into responsible and honest members of society. Students themselves ought to also embrace their own agency and autonomy as this sentiment by Maxine Greene (1978) reflects:

> I am suggesting that, for too many individuals in modern society, there is a feeling of being dominated and that feelings of powerlessness are almost

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inescapable. I am also suggesting that such feelings can to a large degree be overcome through conscious endeavor on the part of individuals to keep themselves awake, to think about their condition in the world, to inquire into the forces that appear to dominate them, to interpret the experiences they are having day by day. Only as they learn to make sense of what is happening, can they feel themselves to be autonomous. Only then can they develop the sense of agency required for living a moral life. (pp. 43-44).

While it seems inarguable that students ought to be reflective and take responsibility for their own choices and actions, the present study has revealed that students' understandings of academic honesty and dishonesty, of their own roles and the roles of their educators, and the purpose of higher education are multifaceted. For me, this complexity means that it is, at best, dangerously simplistic for those of us working in universities to take the view that academic integrity is solely the responsibility of our students. Cole and Conklin (1996), seeing academic integrity policies and procedures as opportunities to teach students about moral leadership and personal ethics, suggested that we are in relationship with our students and that "Administrators, faculty and academic leaders need to recognize that students learn from our responses to academic dishonesty, and from our expectations about their responses to the dishonesty of others" (p. 30). In short, we must model the commitment to academic integrity that we want our students to demonstrate.

In closing, the quality of students' discussions has cemented my belief that it is imperative that educational leaders in all capacities in universities find ways to access and learn from students' experiences, insights, and ideas for the future. For me the future appears most bright when educators are genuinely and actively seeking to understand students' hopes and fears, their achievements and setbacks, and their expectations and disappointments. Then we will have more of what we need to narrow the gap between what we want for students, what they want for themselves, and what we all experience in universities.

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University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Documentation

Application for Approval of Research Protocol
Submitted to the *Behavioural Research Ethics Board*

January 26, 2005

RESEARCHER:	***Susan Bens, B.S.P.E., M. Ed. (Doctoral Candidate)***
	Department of Educational Administration
SUPERVISOR:	Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart
	Department of Educational Administration
CO-SUPERVISOR:	Dr. Randy Wimmer
	Department of Educational Administration

DATA COLLECTION	**START DATE:**	February 1, 2005
	COMPLETION DATE:	September 1, 2006

TITLE OF STUDY: Education students' perceptions of academic integrity at two western Canadian universities.

ABSTRACT: The purpose of the study is to understand undergraduate Education students' perceptions of academic integrity in their learning environment. Volunteer participants from two selected western Canadian universities will participate in focus group sessions between February and June of 2005. Focus groups will be conducted at each university separately with the students from that university. Three or four focus groups of between four and eight participants will be conducted at each site. Students will be asked questions that will generate discussion on what they understand to be the usual and unusual means for the completion of academic work, how they see these practices aligning with the concept of academic integrity, how they have come to have this view, and what common elements or dimensions exist in students' understanding. An analysis of university policy and procedures relating to academic integrity at each university will be conducted as well as an individual interview with the personnel at each university with responsibility for campus-wide academic integrity educational initiatives.

FUNDING: This study is self-funded.

PARTICIPANTS: The participants in the focus groups for this study are undergraduate students enrolled in a B. Ed. program at two selected western Canadian universities. The proposed universities are the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Alberta. Should either decline an alternate western university will be approached. Approval for this study will be sought from the University of Alberta's equivalent body to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board.

Prior to conducting the focus groups, the individuals with responsibility for academic integrity educational initiatives at both universities will be invited to participate in an interview with the researcher. It is anticipated that there will be one interview of this type at each university. Undergraduate education students are the population of interest in this study as not only are they expected to be thoughtful about the purpose of education but they are also future teachers who will have a significant role in shaping the views of academic integrity held by future students of higher education. No further limitations will be made based on gender, age, teaching/subject area, or other individual characteristics.

To recruit participants for the focus groups, the Department Head of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan and the Department Chair of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta will be approached. They will receive a letter of introduction requesting their assistance in recruiting participants. They will be invited to facilitate the recruitment of participants for focus groups by allowing the researcher to make brief announcements in classes offered in their departments. Students in these classes will receive printed information from the researcher that includes a description of the study, next steps to be able to participate in the focus groups, timing and location of focus groups, and a consent form. If more students volunteer to participate in the focus groups than can be accommodated the participants will be selected randomly from the list of volunteers.

The researcher will have no relationship to the students who volunteer to participate in the focus groups.

See Appendix A for the letter of invitation to the Department Head at the University of Saskatchewan and Department Chair at the University of Alberta.

See Appendix B for the recruitment information to be provided to students who are present in the classes addressed by the researcher.

See Appendix C for the information to be provided to students who request an interview with the researcher following the focus group discussion.

See Appendix D for the recruitment information for personnel with responsibility for academic integrity educational initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Alberta.

CONSENT: The consent form is contained in the final sections of Appendices B, C, D. Participants attest, using that form, that they have read and understood the description of the study provided, have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions, and have had their questions satisfactorily answered. They provide their consent to participate in the study as described and confirm that they understand that they may withdraw this consent at any time without penalty. Participants are provided with a copy of the signed consent form for their own records. Consent forms will be kept separate from participant information.

METHODS: Data will be collected using focus groups, individual interviews and document analysis. Three or four focus groups consisting of between four and eight participants will be conducted at each site. Transcripts will be generated from the audio recording of the focus group discussion. These will form the majority of the data for the study. Participants who want to share information with the researcher apart from the focus group will have the option to participate in audio-recorded interviews with the researcher. There is no interview protocol for these follow-up interviews as the information shared will be solely determined by the participants. Transcripts will also be generated from these individual interviews. Interviews with the university personnel responsible for academic integrity educational initiatives will be interviewed and transcripts will be generated.

See Appendix E for the focus group protocol.
See Appendix F for the university personnel interview protocol.

STORAGE OF DATA: Transcription will be done by the researcher. Transcripts will be stored on the file server of the University of Saskatchewan, on the hard drive of a personal computer in the home of the researcher, and on disk. A copy of transcripts and audio recordings will be stored at the University of Saskatchewan in the office of Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart for five years following the completion of the study. After five years, the data will be destroyed.

DISSEMINATION: The data that is collected is intended for use in the doctoral dissertation of the researcher. A secondary intent is to use the data and findings in conference presentations, journal articles, and other scholarly works.

RISK OR DECEPTION: Participants will not be deceived in the course of the study. Risk due to the limits in the ability to guarantee confidentiality in focus group settings is addressed in the next section.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Pseudonyms will be used in transcription and reporting of the data. However, because some of the data will be collected using focus groups, the researcher's ability to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of data is limited.

Focus group participants will be informed that there are limits to which the researcher can ensure the confidentiality of the information shared in focus groups. As a condition of participation, students will sign a consent form acknowledging responsibility and agreement to protect the integrity and confidentiality of what others in the group have said during the focus group discussion.

Students will be advised that if they want to describe an incident or point of view to the researcher that they do not think appropriate for the focus group, they may arrange for an individual interview with the researcher.

University personnel participating in an interview will be informed that the information that they provide will be presented in the final dissertation in a way that may identify their university and them. Due to the intended nature of the interview, this does not present a confidentiality concern. The policies and procedures that will be reviewed in this study are available publicly and will be linked to the institution.

See the sections on confidentiality contained in Appendix B, C and D.

DATA/TRANSCRIPT RELEASE: Participants will be given the opportunity to add, delete, and change the final transcript. Participants will receive a copy of the transcript with their own statements highlighted and their own pseudonym identified. Participants will have the right to withdraw at any time any or all of their responses without penalty. The data will be destroyed after five years. Participants will be asked to sign a transcript release form. To ensure confidentiality, transcript release forms and transcripts will be stored separately.

See Appendix G for focus group transcript release form.
See Appendix H for interview transcript release form.

DEBRIEFING AND FEEDBACK: At the conclusion of each focus group and interview and through correspondence attached to transcripts for review, participants will be reminded of next steps that will be taken in the study and will be invited to ask questions of the researcher. Questions or comments will be invited at any time and participants will have the necessary information to contact the researcher, the Department of Educational Administration, and the Office of Research Services at the University of Saskatchewan and the equivalent office at the University of Alberta. Participants will be alerted to the availability of the dissertation when it is complete.

REQUIRED SIGNATURES

_____
Susan Bens, Doctoral Student

_____
Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart, Supervisor

_____
Dr. Randy Wimmer, Co-supervisor

_____
Dr. Patrick Renihan, Department Head

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Invitational Letter to Departments Heads at the Universities of Alberta and Saskatchewan

Dear [Department Head/Chair]:

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Administration in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. I am conducting a study entitled: *Education Students' Perceptions of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty in their Learning Environment at Two Western Canadian Universities*.

The purpose of this study is to understand Education students' perceptions of academic honesty and dishonesty in their learning environment. I am inviting undergraduate Education students from the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Alberta to participate in focus group interviews. Students will participate in focus groups on their own campus. I will facilitate the focus group using the attached questions as a general guide. The groups will range in size from four to eight students and the 45 to 60 minute discussion will be audio-taped. This study was approved by the research ethics bodies at both the University of Saskatchewan on February 28, 2005 and the University of Alberta on *[insert date]*.

I invite you to participate in this study by facilitating my recruitment of participants for the focus groups at your university. Students may expect to benefit from participating in the focus group in two main ways: first, they will learn what it is like to be engaged in a qualitative educational research process, and second, they are likely to become more reflective and aware of issues of academic honesty and dishonesty in ways that will help them as educators. The focus group sessions will begin with pizza and pop as a token of my thanks for their involvement.

I wish to make brief presentations and distribute information in the classes offered through your department. I will invite students to identify themselves as willing volunteers at the time of the presentation or to contact me afterward by e-mail or phone. Since your department's courses are usually taken by students nearing completion of their B. Ed. program, they are the ideal venue for me to recruit from my target population. Please see a copy of the information and consent form that I will distribute attached.

I look forward to your response to this request for your assistance. If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to contact me using the information below. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart at 966-7611, and the University of Saskatchewan Office of Research Services at 966-2084 and *[the University of Alberta equivalent at phone number]*, to ask any questions.

Sincerely,

Susan Bens
Department of Educational Administration
University of Saskatchewan

Telephone: (306) 966-7660
Facsimile: (306) 966-7020
e-mail: susan.bens@usask.ca

Focus Group Information and Participant Consent Form

DATE

Dear Education Student:

My name is Susan Bens and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Administration in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan.

I wish to invite you to participate in a study entitled: *Education Students' Perceptions of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty in their Learning Environment at Selected Western Canadian Universities*. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have. **You may contact me at 306-966-7660 or by e-mail at <u>susan.bens@usask.ca</u>.**

The purpose of this study is to understand Education students' perceptions of academic honesty and dishonesty in their learning environment. I am inviting undergraduate Education students like you from the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Alberta to participate in group discussions called focus groups. Students from each university will participate in focus groups in convenient locations on their own campus. I will facilitate the focus group using the attached questions as a general guide. The groups will range in size from four to eight students and the 45 to 60 minute discussion will be audio-taped. Within six weeks of our meeting, you will be asked to review the typed transcript of our discussion. You may add, alter, or delete information from the transcript as you see fit.

University of Saskatchewan/Alberta focus group meetings are scheduled as follows:
   Dates   *Times*   *Locations*

To volunteer for one of these sessions, please contact me at <u>susan.bens@usask.ca</u>

You can expect to benefit from participating in the focus group in two main ways: first, you will learn what it is like to be engaged in a qualitative educational research process, and second, you are likely to become more reflective and aware of issues of academic honesty and dishonesty in ways that will help you when you are an educator. The focus groups sessions will begin with pizza and pop as a token of my thanks for your involvement.

The data from this study will be used in the completion of a doctoral dissertation. The data may also be published and presented at conferences. To safeguard your confidentiality and anonymity, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information such as your university, your program of study within the B. Ed. degree, your courses, professors, and fellow students will be removed.

Because the participants for this study have been selected from among Education students it is possible that you may be known to other people in the focus group or identifiable to others on the basis of what you have said. As the researcher, I will undertake to safeguard the confidentiality

of the discussion, but cannot guarantee that other members of the group will do so. Please respect the confidentiality of the other members of the group by not disclosing the contents of this discussion outside the group, and be aware that others may not respect your confidentiality.

Should you wish to comment on some aspect of the focus group's discussion or to offer information that you felt was of a confidential nature but could be meaningful for this study, you will be given the opportunity to arrange for an individual interview with me at the end of the focus group interview, or by contacting me at a later time, and will need to complete a similar but separate consent form at that time.

The audio recordings and transcripts of our discussion will be stored at the University of Saskatchewan as will your contact information. These data will be stored in the office of my supervising professor, Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart for five years, after which time they will be destroyed. You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact me at the number and e-mail address provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Science Research Ethics Board on February 28, 2005. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Office of Research Services (306-966-2084) at the University of Saskatchewan. Out of town participants may call collect.

When the dissertation is complete, a notice will be sent to each participant about how to access the document from the University of Saskatchewan library or other sources.

<div align="center">Consent to participate</div>

I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of the Researcher

APPENDIX D

Guiding Questions for University Personnel Interview

1. What does this university do to educate students on issues of academic integrity?
2. Why have you chosen this approach?
3. How effective are these initiatives?

Policy Administrators Interview Information and

Participant Consent Form

Dear (university personnel):

My name is Susan Bens and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Administration in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan.

I wish to invite you to participate in a study entitled: *Education Students' Perceptions of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty in their Learning Environment at Selected Western Canadian Universities*. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have. You may contact me at 306-966-7660 or by e-mail at susan.bens@usask.ca.

The purpose of this study is to understand Education students' perceptions of academic honesty and dishonesty in their learning environment. I am inviting undergraduate Education students from the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Alberta to participate in focus group interviews.

To assist me in achieving an understanding of the institutional learning environment, I wish to conduct an interview with you regarding the academic integrity educational initiatives that are in place at your university. The questions that will guide the interview are attached. I will contact you to arrange an interview should you be interested in participating.

Within six weeks of our meeting, you will be asked to review the typed transcript of our interview. You may add, alter, or delete information from the transcript as you see fit. I may also contact you within six months for points of clarification that will assist me in analysis. You should note that the information you provide will be used in the dissertation information that identifies the university, the educational initiatives, and your role will be included.

The data from this study will be used in the completion of a doctoral dissertation. The data may also be published and presented at conferences. It is my hope that you will find beneficial uses for the written report of your initiatives.

The audio recordings and transcripts of our discussion will be stored at the University of Saskatchewan as will your contact information. These data will be stored in the office of my supervising professor, Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart for five years.

You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact me at the number and e-mail address provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Science Research Ethics Board on February 28, 2005 and *[the University of Alberta equivalent]* on *[insert date]*. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Office of Research Services (306-966-2084) at the University of Saskatchewan and the *[University of Alberta equivalent]*. Out of town participants may call the University of Saskatchewan collect.

When the dissertation is complete, a notice will be sent to each participant about how to access the document from the University of Saskatchewan library or other sources.

<div align="center">Consent to participate</div>

I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of the Researcher

APPENDIX F

Guiding Questions for Focus Group Discussion

1. What does academic honesty mean to you?
2. What does academic dishonesty mean to you?
3. What are the usual ways that students go about completing their academic work?
4. What would you consider to be unusual or unexpected ways for students to complete their academic work?
5. How have you come to have this view?
6. Do you expect your peers share this view? Why?
7. Do you expect your professors share this view? Why?
8. How do you think university policies on academic dishonesty would apply to what we have been talking about?
9. How would you describe the overall atmosphere for academic honesty here?
10. Should universities care about whether students are academically honest or dishonest? Why or why not?

Individual Follow-up Interview Information and Participant Consent Form

Dear Education Student:

As you know from your earlier participation in a focus group, my name is Susan Bens and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Administration in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan.

Thank you for your interest in participating in an individual interview with me as a follow up to your participation in a focus group for a study entitled: *Education Students' Perceptions of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty in their Learning Environment at Selected Western Canadian Universities*. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have. You may contact me at 306-966-7660 or by e-mail at susan.bens@usask.ca.

As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to understand Education students' perceptions of academic honesty and dishonesty in their learning environment. This interview is arranged at your request in response to an invitation to focus group participants to comment confidentially on some aspect of the focus group's discussion or to offer information that you feel could be meaningful for this study. Because this interview is a separate occasion of data collection, you must complete this similar but separate consent form.

The interview will be audio recorded. You will determine the specific topic related to academic integrity of the interview and I will have no predetermined questions although I may have follow-up questions to your comments. Within six weeks of our meeting, you will be asked to review the typed transcript of the interview. You may add, alter, or delete information from the transcript as you see fit. I may also contact you within six months for points of clarification that will assist me in analysis.

The data from this study will be used in the completion of a doctoral dissertation. The data may also be published and presented at conferences. To safeguard your confidentiality and anonymity, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information such as your university, your program of study within the B. Ed. degree, your courses, professors, and fellow students will be removed.

The audio recordings and transcripts of our discussion will be stored at the University of Saskatchewan as will your contact information. These data will be stored in the office of my supervising professor, Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart for five years.

You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact me at the number and e-mail address provided above if you have questions at a

later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Science Research Ethics Board on February 28, 2005 and *(the University of Alberta equivalent)* on *(insert date).* Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Office of Research Services (966-2084) at the University of Saskatchewan and the *(University of Alberta equivalent).* Out of town participants may call collect.

When the dissertation is complete, a notice will be sent to each participant about how to access the document from the University of Saskatchewan library or other sources.

<div align="center">Consent to participate</div>

I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of the Researcher

APPENDIX H

Focus Group Transcript Release Form

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my participation in a focus group discussion for this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in the focus group discussion facilitated by Susan Bens. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Susan Bens to be used in the manner described in the consent form. I have received a copy of this Transcript Release Form for my own records.

_____   _____

Participant   Date

_____   _____

Researcher   Date

Interview Transcript Release Form

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Susan Bens. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Susan Bens to be used in the manner described in the consent form. I have received a copy of this Transcript Release Form for my own records.

_____   _____
Participant   Date

_____   _____
Researcher   Date

APPENDIX J

Report of the Auditor

Letter of Attestation

This letter of attestation is in relation to the inquiry audit of the Ph.D. dissertation written by Susan Bens entitled "Education Students' Perceptions of Academic Honesty and Dishonesty in their Learning Environment at Selected Western Canadian Universities."

The purpose of this study is to understand undergraduate Education students' perceptions of academic integrity in their learning environment.

Recordings.

1. Consent and Data/Transcript release forms

All of the 'Consent forms' and 'Data/Transcript Release Forms' for the U of A participants in this research study are reviewed for signatures and completion. The forms:

      a) list the participants of the study provided for the audit and
      b) are signed by the participants and the researcher.

At the time of this audit the required forms for the U of S were not available.

2. Selection of Samples for Verification and Accuracy of Tape Recordings to Transcripts:

a) Procedure and Observations for disk to transcripts tests:

There are 5 interview tapes. Two are randomly chosen for testing. The first page of each and then 3 times during fast-forwarding, the tapes were paused to compare audio statements to the transcripts to note any discrepancies.

b) Accuracy of Quotations in Relation to Data Sources

All comparisons between recordings and transcripts were positive. The words spoken on disk were the words that appeared in transcripts.

3. Accuracy of Dissertation Chapters Four, Five and Six References to Transcripts:

a) Procedure and Observations for Chapters 4, 5 and 6 references.

I observed 152 quoted references to the working papers in chapters 4, 5 and 6. I chose a random sample of 15 of those references and compared them to the supporting working documents.

b) Accuracy of References in Dissertation to Disk Recording Transcripts.

All references investigated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 were found and verified as accurate.

4. Inspection of Ethics Proposal and Certificate.

I have reviewed the candidate's application for approval of Research Protocol and the ethics statement provided. The procedures used by researcher and the protocols followed

in the research are consistent with this approval. An analysis of the data reduction and interpretation of data was not considered by this audit. It remains for the researcher to turn the materials above, over to the University for secure storage for a five-year period.

5. Summary

Despite minor omissions the transcripts and data files are accurate transcriptions of the recorded interviews. The transcription of quotations in the dissertation represent a faithful record of the tape-held interview transcripts.

As a result of the audit, I as auditor, testify that the transcripts/data sheets which I have examined in relation to the Jane Preston dissertation are true and accurate.

(retired member Institute of Internal Auditors and Association of College and University Auditors)

2010-06-26

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