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ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A SOCIOLOGICAL

EXAMINATION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF APPROPRIATE

ACADEMIC SHARING

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
in the College of Education and Human Performance
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Summer Term
2014

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ABSTRACT

Most prior research and scholarship views cheating as an individual failing rather than a sociological or organizational phenomenon. The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges students face in graduate education and the factors that affect ethical beliefs towards academic dishonesty. This study used a mixed method research approach including an online survey with approximately 1,250 responses from graduate students representing each of UCF's colleges and fifteen interviews with students in fourteen different disciplines. Results of the online survey indicated no significant differences between international and domestic students. Survey and interview data indicate that graduate students' perceptions of the perceived norms and expectations related to academic honesty are impacted by the culture of the academic program. Analyzing these data through three sociological theories of deviance – anomie, labeling, and rational choice – shows that graduate students' understanding of appropriate academic behavior depends on their academic socialization. The data also reveal that graduate students struggle with subtleties of cheating, such as misrepresentation or "fudging" of data. Especially for the doctoral students in the sample, their views were highly influenced by viewing themselves as teachers and independent researchers. This sociological analysis emphasizes the role of culture in graduate programs and students' socialization into those cultures. This doctoral dissertation also provides a deeper understanding of the social and organizational factors affecting graduate students and re-frames students' perspectives on appropriate academic behavior.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. David Boote for his guidance throughout my doctoral career. I would also like to thank each of my dissertation committee members, Dr. Karen Biraimah, Dr. Tom Owens, and Dr. Thomas Vitale for their participation on the committee and the advice that each provided. Thank you to the graduate students who participated in the study, as well, for making this research possible.

I am especially grateful to my parents, Janet and Jon, and all of my family and friends for their support and encouragement throughout the years. And finally, to Delia Garcia, thank you for your continued love and optimism.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Academic dishonesty in research practices and higher education as a whole is a frequent point of discussion for many university administrators, faculty, and students. How the academic institution promotes academic integrity and ethical practices can be important when it comes to how a student views his or her role within the academic culture. As noted by Davis, Grover, Beck, and McGregor (1992), preventative measures may deter cheating in some cases, but in order for the behavior to truly cease, students need to develop a commitment to the educational process and have an internalized code of ethics that opposes cheating.

As Davis et al. (1992) note, institutions and their faculties must "openly and uniformly support" ethical behaviors" (p. 19) if they want their students to make appropriate choices when it comes to academic integrity. Universities across the United States are looking for ways to better inform students and faculty about the ethical responsibilities associated with research, as well as at ways to assess and help reduce instances of academic dishonesty in higher education. Programs such as the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) exist to provide online research ethics education to students and faculty in the research community, and some universities have implemented specific academic integrity workshops or other training requirements for their students. In the past, efforts to reduce unethical behavior in academia were geared mostly towards the undergraduate population. However, recently, a focus on graduate education and academic integrity has made its way to the forefront.

As a means of addressing the issue of research and academic dishonesty at the graduate school level, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) launched the Project for Scholarly

Integrity, an initiative to institutionalize responsible conduct of research and integrity education. Among other things, the CGS Project for Scholarly Integrity addresses the ethical obligations of universities and strategies for institutionalizing changes in the research environment ("Council of Graduate Schools," 2008). As stated in the Project for Scholarly Integrity in Graduate Education: A Framework for Collaborative Action (2008), the Council of Graduate Schools notes that,

> The efforts to place greater emphasis on research integrity are important in the context of three phenomena: (1) an increase in the number of reported cases of misconduct, nationally and internationally; (b) the encroachment of external pressures upon academic research as interaction and interdependence intensifies among academic, commercial, and government sectors; and (c) the expanding scope of researchers' responsibilities as a consequence of the globalization of the scientific community. (p. 3)

While initiatives such as the one launched by the Council of Graduate Schools may help to promote ethical decision-making in regards to the conduct of scholarly research, an area that needs more considerable consideration is the impact culture, whether it is the cultural background of the student, or the culture of the academic environment, has on ethical and unethical practices within academia. Do attitudes differ among students in programs with a heavier research focus, for example, than those in a degree program with more of a practical focus? Or, do the perceptions of students vary based on differences in ethnic or cultural backgrounds? It is important that administrators at educational institutions are better informed on why students are engaging in the behaviors so that the ethics training and other programs that may be instituted in the universities are targeting the actual issues at hand and addressing the problems to the appropriate audience.

We know that some students engage in cheating behaviors, but less is known about where students draw the line between collaborative learning and inappropriate academic sharing and

how the culture of the student and/or of the environment impacts a student's ethical decision making process. Moreover, in some situations, students might not even recognize their actions as unethical. For example, if a student submits the same paper to earn credit for course assignments in multiple classes, he or she has committed self-plagiarism. However, the student may believe that because he or she wrote the content of the paper to begin with, that plagiarism is not being committed.

The expectations within the academic discipline and the scholarly integrity of the program faculty are likely to influence graduate students' perceptions of appropriate academic conduct, as well, but it is not clear to what extent. Fundamentally, the question is not whether graduate students engage in unethical academic behaviors, but rather, what are the factors that drive them to do so? Are the challenges and pressures of succeeding in graduate school so great that students feel they have to cheat to be competitive? Or, does the engagement in unethical scholarly behavior relate more to how the individual views the graduate program's culture and the way that he or she fits into it as a student at the institution?

<div align="center">Statement of the problem</div>

In November 2010, the University of Central Florida made headlines due to an investigation that was underway into a cheating scandal that took place among nearly 200 students in a College of Business undergraduate course. All 600 students in the course were asked to take a rewritten exam after it was discovered that nearly one-third of the students in the strategic management course had likely cheated by reviewing an exam key in advance ("Orlando Sentinel," 2014). Although this particular occurrence of academic dishonesty involved

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undergraduates only, it certainly brought more attention to the need to address issues of academic integrity with the members of the university community, including graduate students.

Graduate students bring to academia a variety of personal experiences and realities that span across cultures. However, while assumptions can be made, it is often not clear how the students perceive their role within their graduate programs, what challenges they face, and how they define appropriate academic sharing. These factors may not only vary by program, but specific differences could exist among international and domestic students, as well. In fact, as Lupton (2002) asserts, research does not clearly identify how students from diverse countries view cheating.

This doctoral research study examines the impact of culture on the ethical perspectives of both domestic and international students in graduate programs at the University of Central Florida and uses the students' perspectives to help determine what causes students to disregard scholarly integrity and engage in unethical behavior in graduate school.

Purpose of the Study

Graduate education brings together people of all cultures and serves as a forum for collaborations on research, the sharing of intellectual property, and in many instances, a gateway to partnerships with and positions within industry. However, with the intense pressure to succeed, some graduate students engage in unethical behaviors to excel academically. In fact, researchers report that cheating is widespread throughout the United States (Lupton, 2002). Growing up within the culture, domestic graduate students are likely to agree on common definitions of academic dishonesty. However, individuals from outside the U.S. may enter

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American universities with definitions and interpretations of cheating that vary greatly from that of their domestic peers. Once engaged in academics in the U.S., all students may face challenges within the academic culture that they had not anticipated. This may include problems with other students or faculty, financial difficulties, family pressures, or a variety of other challenges.

As noted by Ashworth et al. (1997), having a better understanding of students' perspectives on cheating can help academics better communicate appropriate norms. The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges students face in graduate education and the determinants of ethical beliefs towards academic dishonesty. As the researcher, I also aimed to clarify the definitions and understanding of appropriate academic sharing held by domestic and international graduate students. I hope that this doctoral dissertation will provide readers with a deeper understanding of the social and organizational factors affecting graduate students and therefore, provide insight into the students' perspectives on appropriate academic sharing.

<u>Research Questions</u>

Graduate students face a number of challenges throughout their educational careers. It is hypothesized that there is a significant difference in ethical decision-making among graduate students with different backgrounds and within different academic disciplines. By conducting the study, the researcher aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How does culture (of the individual and the environment of the academic program and institution) relate to the challenges graduate students face and the students' perceptions of academic dishonesty?

a. To what extent do the norms and expectations of an academic discipline impact graduate students' understanding of appropriate academic sharing?

b. To what extend do the ethical or unethical academic practices of the instructor impact the actions of graduate students?

2. What differences currently exist among graduate students with regard to perceived opportunity to engage in academic dishonesty, student attitudes, and definitions of appropriate academic sharing?

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study was the lack of any international student participation in the face-to-face interviews. Ideally, future research will include a closer examination of the views on appropriate academic sharing from the perspective of more international and domestic graduate students.

Assumptions

The assumptions for this study include:

1. That the results gathered from the online survey and interviews are generalizable to the population of large, research universities in the United States.

2. Participants' responses to both the online survey and the interview questions were honest and accurately reflect their views on appropriate academic sharing and the challenges of graduate education.

Initially, university administrators, program directors, and faculty will benefit from this research study. In particular, it is beneficial for university faculty to understand how graduate students view the culture of their academic programs, particularly in regards to academic integrity. This will help the faculty address areas of confusion and ideally, prevent the breach of scholarly integrity (responsible research practices) from occurring. This research expands the scope of existing data, such as that gathered from the Council of Graduate School's Project for Scholarly Integrity, by incorporating a focus on culture. The need for an increase in the development of ethics education curriculum is clear, but we are still lacking information on cultural differences that will enhance the development of the curriculum and bring awareness to graduate students, thereby improving retention rates by addressing factors that typically cause stress and anxiety for students.

Graduate students will also benefit from what could come about as a result of this study. Having more knowledge about graduate students' definitions and understanding of appropriate academic sharing will provide institutions more reliable data on how to create appropriate and relevant instruction related to ethics and scholarly integrity in the graduate school environment. This in turn should promote more academic honesty and integrity within research and other scholarly activities at the graduate level.

Ultimately, industry could benefit from this study as well, once universities implement ethics educational programs that impact future employees. Results of the study will provide data

to universities that may be beneficial when developing more effective curricula that addresses the complexities of ethical decision making in graduate school.

Summary

As Love and Simmons (1998), note, despite the increased attention given to academic integrity, there is still little focus in the literature on the issue of graduate student cheating. While the ultimate choice to engage in inappropriate academic sharing or other unethical academic behaviors is that of the student, it is the graduate student's past experiences, culture, and the environment of the graduate program that may most strongly influence these decisions. Based on interviews conducted throughout this study, it became evident that students who attended undergraduate school in the United States were exposed to the cheating behaviors of others at surprisingly high rates, and acknowledged that it was common place among many of their peers. It is unreasonable to think that students who engaged in those behaviors in undergraduate education would automatically stop engaging in those behaviors as they progress to graduate school. However, learning more about graduate students' perceptions of the culture of graduate education and how it compares to their undergraduate experience does give us additional insight into how their past experiences influence their present views on academic integrity..

The results of this study identify the particular challenges that the members of the graduate student population face, but also demonstrate that it is helpful to have an understanding of the group dynamics within graduate programs. Ultimately, the choice to cheat is often an individual one, but the causes that lead the student to do so may stem from their experiences

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within the culture of the graduate program. I hope that this research will promote the development of trainings and best practices that will not only inform students about academic integrity, but perhaps even more importantly, help with the creation of support systems for students that address the cause(s) of the cheating behavior.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Cheating is a serious problem in higher education. In fact, research suggests that violations are frequent (Rettinger and Kramer, 2009; McCabe and Trevion, 1993). A contributing factor may actually be that students do not even consider their actions to be dishonest or unethical. This could be the result of differences in cultural norms, beliefs, and traditions, as well as students' perceptions of what constitutes academic dishonesty. While cheating among college students in the U.S. has been well documented in various published reports (Lupton, 2002), research is lacking on the influence of culture on cheating behavior(s). Most of the existing literature focuses on the individual or the means in which the cheating was carried out. Furthermore, the focus is most frequently on the undergraduate population, perhaps due to the fact that the numbers are so much greater than that of the graduate population. However, because it is the graduate students who will become faculty and in many cases, transition to higher level positions in industry, it is crucial that this population is well-understood in regards to the challenges they face in graduate school and the decisions they make in regards to academic honesty and appropriate academic sharing. It is also important to view cheating behaviors through a sociological lens so that we can consider the broader cultural aspects related to the behavior, not just the actions of an individual. This is not to take the blame away from the individual and put it on external forces, but rather, to gain a better understanding of students' perceptions of how the culture around them impacts the choices that they make and how they define academic honesty.

<div align="center">Theoretical Framework</div>

The culture that surrounds us helps make us who we are and impacts the ways in which we react in certain situations. This can include individuals' engagement in dishonest or unethical behavior, as well. Several different sociological theories can help explain students' behaviors that would go against what most people in society deem as appropriate, or the norm, in relation to academia. As with most situations regarding deviant behavior, a combination of theories can be applied to cheating behaviors, depending on the specifics being discussed. Rational choice theory, labeling theory, and strain or anomie theory all have different aspects that will be applied to the findings of this study to help analyze the results of both the survey and interview responses.

Anomie Theory

As Emile Durkheim (1938) noted, there is no society that exists without the problem of criminality. Within universities, graduate programs often function as subcultures within the institution. As students move into higher education, there is often more at stake personally and professionally than at the undergraduate level. The idea of anomie, most notably discussed by Durkheim and later modified by Robert Merton to address the achievement of life goals and how people go about achieving them, can be used as a theoretical framework to gain insight into what takes place in graduate education with regard to ethical decision making practices. As Clinard and Meier (2008) note, anomie theory "explains deviance in a way related to the principles of social disorganization" (p. 71). The anomie perspective accounts not only for the social organization and its conduciveness to deviance, but also to the origins of the motivations of the

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behavior (Clinard and Meier, 2008). This perspective is useful when researching ethical

decision-making in higher education because it implies that the structure of society (or in this

case, the culture of the graduate program or the institution in general), promotes deviance by

making it a viable option to achieve success. Davis et al. (1992) found that pressures for good

grades, student stress, ineffective deterrents, and condoning teachers are all important

determinants of cheating. While some students will successfully manage the strains of graduate

school, others may use innovation to adapt; they will engage in illegitimate practices to achieve

their goals.

Reducing the incidences of academic dishonesty is of course a concern, but the well-

being of the students is also important. Those students who struggle the most and essentially

abandon the cultural goals may eventually retreat after "fully internalizing the cultural goals of

success but finding them unavailable through established, institutional means" (Clinard and

Meier, 2008, p. 73). These students who cannot handle the challenges they face may make

inappropriate choices that could be damaging to their futures and to their overall well-being.

As noted by Wallace and Wolf (1999), Durkheim is known for his functionalist ideas on

the "incorporation of individuals into the social order" (p.21). With an increase in the division of

labor, Durkheim argued, came an increase in individualism and a decrease in collective

conscience (Wallace and Wolf, 1999). In this rapidly changing society, people have become in a

sense, more self-serving. We can see this in relation to cheating behaviors and the potential for

punishments, as well. When making the choice to engage in inappropriate academic sharing, for

example, most students do so knowing that there is potential for being discovered, but they take

the risk anyway. The question is, why, when it is well-known that it is wrong, and there is potential for punishment, do students continue to cheat?

Cheating can occur in a variety of forms and people can have different perceptions of each individual event. However, the acts themselves are not always done independently. One more recently growing aspect of cheating behaviors, or plagiarism more specifically, relates to the emphasis on group-based learning with the "attendant ambiguity over collective and individual ownership which this can bring" (Ashworth, Freewood, and Macdonald, 2003; Ashworth, Bannister, and Thorne., 1997; Thorley and Gregory, 1994). For example, one student might think it is perfectly acceptable to ask another student for help with a class assignment, while another might consider that inappropriate academic sharing. The circumstances and context of the situation could certainly have an impact on a person's perception of the events. In their 2006 study, Clegg and Flint followed the work of Ashworth et al. (2003) and asked the phenomenological question of "what is plagiarism in its appearing?" when exploring students' understandings of plagiarism (p. 374). As Clegg and Flint (2006) note, understandings of plagiarism are culturally relative, but there is a lack of agreement over the "boundary between legitimate paraphrasing and plagiarizing" (p. 374). This same uncertainty over boundaries is likely to exist in other aspects of academic dishonesty, as well. As Faucher and Caves (2009) note, cheating occurs through a variety of means, including taking, giving, and receiving information from others or by using forbidden material or information, as well as by circumventing the process of assessment. Some students find these behaviors acceptable, while others disagree. If there was one specific solution for ending violations of academic integrity, it

would surely be implemented in universities across the country. However, since that is not the case, university administrators continue to try out strategies for preventing the negative behavior.

It is the recommendation of Faucher and Caves (2009) that educational programs use available resources to develop policies and procedures that will maintain the program's academic integrity (p.40). In an ideal setting, the implementation of appropriate policies and procedures designed to educate people and enhance and maintain a program's academic integrity would be enough. However, providing material alone will likely not be a solution for all programs. In order for educational programs to develop such policies, it is important that the resources are substantial, substantive, and appropriate for the audience.

While the overall end result is the same, many of the aspects of cheating today do not mirror those of even a decade ago in terms of the ways that it can be accomplished. In our highly technological society, students are becoming increasingly savvy with the ways that they are using technology to assist in their endeavors. As Ashworth, Bannister, and Thorne (1997) note, plagiarism in particular is of a particular concern because of the more integral role technologies play in student learning. One recommendation made by Faucher and Caves (2009) is that faculty actually cut off wireless hot spots and access during examinations and have the students surrender their electronic devices and other personal items that could be used to conceal answers prior to taking the exam. This approach is probably not feasible for most faculty due to class size and a lack of resources to assist with the process, but it may be a solution for some, although it still fails to address the cause of the cheating in the first place.

As a graduate student, I understand that there are pressures to make good academic progress and to complete the graduate degree. We all face deadlines and are often juggling

educational responsibilities with professional and personal obligations. However, the extent of what is required from us, or what we perceive is required of us, as students may vary by academic discipline. A graduate program with a focus on research might emphasize publishing in a respected journal, for example, while the focus of another academic discipline might be on practical experience within the field or performance within classroom setting. Furthermore, how cheating behaviors are addressed by faculty mentors and peers might also help shape students' views. As Magnus, Polterovich, Danilov, and Savvateev (2002) state, "the difference in tolerance of cheating might not depend on culture (or not only on culture) but on the design of the educational system: the grading system, selection procedures, severity of punishment, number of students in classes, existence of study groups, existence of code of honor, and so forth" (p. 130). Similarly, if students share a negative attitude toward cheating, it is not likely they will get help cheating and they are more likely to have their behavior exposed to a teacher (Magnus et al., 2002). Therefore, the way the behavior is viewed by other members of the graduate program may influence the behavior of the individual.

Agnew (2001) states that objective strain refers to events or conditions that are disliked by most members of a given group (p.320), while subjective strain refers to events or conditions that are disliked by the people who are experiencing or have experienced them (p.321). People experiencing subjective strain, therefore, according to Agnew (2001) are "experiencing an event or condition that they dislike" (p.321). Subjective strain, he argues, deals with the individual's own evaluation of the event or condition. Therefore, it is how that person sees the circumstances and the emotions that are caused by the situation that become most relevant, not how outsiders might define it. Two people could view the event or condition in the same way and dislike it

equally, resulting in each person having the same level of subjective strain. At the same time, however, those same individuals may experience different emotions related to their dislike of the condition or event. For example, while they both dislike it, the situation may cause one person to be angry and the other to experience depression (Agnew, 2001, p.322).

In the context of graduate education, a condition that a student might dislike could include a number of things, such as poor academic performance, pressure or coercion to produce research data or publish in scholarly journals, feelings of isolation within the culture of the program, or criticism from family members if success goals are not met. As Agnew (2001) notes, we should examine both objective and subjective strain in order to distinguish external events from the subjective evaluation of the events and also look at individual and group differences in both the exposure to external events or conditions that often cause strain and the subjective evaluation of those events or conditions (p.322).

This doctoral dissertation looks not only at whether students have engaged in dishonest academic behavior, but also at peoples' views on the subject, their definitions, and how they feel about the culture of their graduate program and how that culture influences them and their opinions on academic integrity. In addition, through in-depth interviews with graduate students, I uncovered other factors that have an impact on graduate students' opinions on academic dishonesty and learned more about how the students' opinions are shaped based on their experiences.

A person's background may play a role in their attitudes toward academic honestly. Interestingly, Magnus et al. (2002) found that a student's residence impacts his or her attitude toward cheating and that his or her opinion also depends on his or her level of education. While

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they did not arrive at a solid conclusion as to why this is the case, they hypothesized that there is a link between cheating and corruption from common cultural roots. As they suggest, more work is needed to determine the impact these cultural roots truly have on students' perceptions of and attitudes towards academic dishonesty. This is true for both domestic and international students, but international students certainly bring with them a unique set of circumstances when entering academia in the United States from abroad.

International students may experience additional challenges that are not shared by their domestic peers. While funding issues are not only associated with international students, students coming to study in the United States from abroad are often faced with the challenge of securing and maintaining consistent funding so that they can remain in status for their visa requirements and ultimately, complete their degree. If the funding is provided in the form of a graduate research or teaching assistantship, the graduate student may feel as though his or her future is dependent upon performing well and therefore strive to meet the expectations of their faculty supervisor(s). In some cases, students are hesitant to discuss their academic or financial concerns or talk about the stress or challenges they are experiencing out of fear of losing their funding or jeopardizing the relationship with the faculty advisor. Being labeled as a problem student or someone that is difficult to work with could also pose serious problems for the individual.

If a student feels that his or her funding could be put at risk by raising issues with or about his or her advisor, the individual may make unfavorable choices because of this strain he or she is feeling as a result of the situation. If exposed for negative behavior, and labeled as a cheater, however, that negative label could end up causing even more emotional strain for the

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student than the worry of losing the funding. By being labeled as a deviant, the identity of the person is altered to his or her discredit (Thomson, 2012).

Labeling Theory

John Kitsuse's (1962) views on defining behaviors as deviant and identifying how those definitions "organize and activate the societal reactions by which persons come to be differentiated and treated as deviants" (p.248) will be utilized in the context of this doctoral dissertation. It is widely recognized that labeling theory does not address an initial deviant action or behavior, but focuses rather on how being labeled as a deviant impacts a person's self-concept and influences his or her future engagement in deviant behavior. As Goode (1975) notes, the person imposing the label make the assumption that the person engaging in the deviant act is aware that the behavior is regarded as negative or wrong by most of their peers (p.579). According to Goode (1975), once the individual has been publicly labeled a deviant, he or she may accept or reject the label, but they are aware that it exists.

Labeling theory is somewhat limited in its application but does provide a way of looking at certain "features" of deviance (Goode, 1975, p.581). It is assumed that by being labeled as a cheater, for example, that the person will subsequently engage in additional cheating behaviors if given the opportunity. The continuation and duration of the behavior is an important consideration, but by getting more to the root of the initial action, I think that we will have a better understanding of why students engage in acts of academic dishonesty. Therefore, labeling theory is useful in the analysis of the continuation of cheating behaviors and will be applied

when applicable throughout the discussion of the research findings, but will be used in conjunction with other theories of deviance that more appropriately address the initial behavior.

In rare cases, engaging in that initial cheating behavior is done without the understanding that the behavior is wrong or punishable by university sanctions. However, as graduate students, these individuals have joined the program after completing years of undergraduate coursework and in the case of doctoral students, many of them are entering the program with an earned master's degree and should be able to distinguish appropriate and inappropriate behavior in regards to their personal scholarly integrity. This is not to say that there are not complex situations in which students need guidance to help them make the best choices. For example, presenting research findings in an unbiased way may require some help from a faculty advisor who has experience writing journal papers or other scholarly works. Ideally, faculty mentors are available to provide guidance in those types of situations. However, when it comes to more blatant acts of academic dishonestly such as cheating on examinations, graduate students should understand the appropriate action to take. Some students recognize what constitutes academic dishonesty, but feel overwhelmed by pressures and go against what they view as appropriate academic behavior so that they can achieve success, regardless of the risks. Furthermore, some graduate students may simply follow the lead of their faculty in their research ethics; doing so can be both positive and negative, depending on the ethical behavior of the faculty within the academic discipline. If the person's negative behavior is exposed and the person is labeled as a cheater, however, the consequences could be much worse than the initial stress that was felt.

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Rational Choice Theory

We all make choices. Some are good, some are bad, but in most cases, the choice is ultimately ours to make. Whether or not the decision that was made or the behavior that was exhibited was rational depends on the individual's underlying goals and beliefs (Miller, Shoptaugh, and Woolridge, 2011). The reality is that as individuals we often analyze the costs and benefits of a certain action and make choices about our goals and how to go about achieving them. Rational choice theorists assert that an action represents a choice made by a person to behave in a certain way, to think in a certain way, or to live a certain kind of lifestyle (Clinard and Meier, 2011). Rational choice theory can be used to examine the reasons why individuals choose to engage in academic dishonesty, and in combination with a phenomenological approach, get to the root of why a person makes a specific decision or choice to engage or not to engage in cheating behaviors in academia. As Clinard and Meier (2011) note, the key is to understand the context of the decision and factors that brought users to that decision.

Wallace and Wolf (1999) state that rational choice theorists emphasize how the award of social approval in small groups "affects behavior and also, over time, leads to the internalization of norms about what is desirable" (p.415). In some cases, students learn the behavior, or at least justify inappropriate academic practices because they have seen similar things taking place within their academic program, whether it was on the part of other students, or perhaps even faculty. Those students have weighed the costs and benefits of their actions and make the choice to engage in specific behaviors. It is important to recognize, though, that the culture of a graduate

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program could impact the perceptions that students have and the choices that they make in regards to their academics.

As noted by Rawwas, Swaidan, and Isakson (2007), differences in cultures may impact ethical behaviors. The culture of the educational setting, the academic discipline, and the student's nationality and familiarity with the standard practices of an American university may all influence his or her perceptions of academic achievement and what behavior and activities are acceptable in order to achieve success. Therefore, it is necessary to consider culture when studying issues related to academic dishonesty so that practices can be implemented to promote more ethically sound academic climates. Additionally, more research is needed to identify overall challenges graduate students face and factors that cause them stress, so that universities can increase retention and decrease attrition rates within graduate programs.

<div align="center">Cultural Views on Appropriate Academic Sharing</div>

The Oxford Dictionary defines culture as the attitudes and behavior characteristic of a particular social group. At its core, culture does not stem from an individual, but from the collective. While the literature on cheating is growing, most of the research aims to find out more about the person who committed the act, how it was committed, and how to prevent it from happening in the future; the cheating is considered an individual failing, not a failing of the educational institution. I aim to add to the existing body of literature by looking more into the culture of the graduate students, but even more so, of the graduate programs at the institution to better understand the views of their members. I think that students often model their own actions based on the role models they have, the actions of their peers, and other influences around them. In many cases, engaging in deviant behaviors is not a singular act, but rather a result of

interpreting the action to be acceptable based on how that individual views the culture surrounding him or her.

Their culture and the environment around them may influence students' perceptions of appropriate academic sharing. As Kini, Ramakrishna, and Vijayaraman (2004) note in their research on "moral intensity" as it relates to Thai and American students, "the level of moral intensity of individuals is related to (or influenced by) their perceptions of the level of moral intensity of their immediate community, other students, and university employees" (p. 68). As such, if the program faculty members are not encouraging academic integrity, or if it is evident that other students are engaging in unethical academic practices with no negative consequences, this could certainly impact the decisions made by an individual.

At the University of Central Florida, the Office of Research and Commercialization promotes the responsible conduct of research and provides training and resources on the subject. However, as with at any institution, not all faculty and students adhere to the policies and guidelines in place. In 2012, there were three federal investigations into faculty plagiarism in research proposals (Central Florida Future, 2012). Interestingly, Dr. Guifang Li, one of the faculty members under investigation stated the following when interviewed by Alicia DelGallo at the Central Florida Future,

> In the scientific world, you reference something by putting a bracket. If the written copy is the same, then I need to put a quotation mark or indent, which, obviously, I did not know I needed to do that. The NSF considers this stuff high school students should know. Of course, I never attended high school here.

> Dr. Li was not found guilty of research misconduct by UCF, but the National Science

Foundation disagreed and determined that he was "unable to receive federal funding for research

until 2013" (Central Florida Future, 2012). The second faculty member in question, Dr. Swadeshmukul Santra, an associate professor of nanotechnology, was found guilty by the National Science Foundation in March 2011 of research misconduct due to plagiarism (Central Florida Future, 2012). The third faculty member under investigation was found not guilty by the National Science Foundation.

Graduate students often spend time working on their faculty advisor's research. This can result in them being listed as an author on a publication and getting some acknowledgement for their efforts, although that is not always the case. When things come into question, the graduate student could also be the scapegoat for the errors included in the publication. According to Delgallo's (2012) article in the Central Florida Future, Dr. Santra said, "graduate students were responsible for the citation errors". Apparently, like himself, some of the graduate students (although not identified), were from India, and according to DelGallo (2012), Santra, a faculty member also from India, believed that the "language barrier and international schooling may have contributed to the mistakes" (Central Florida Future, 2012). This situation demonstrates the need to have a better understanding of cultural barriers and students' interpretations and understanding of academic honesty. But perhaps even more relevant is the fact that the faculty member blamed the errors on the graduate students rather than taking responsibility for the fact that as the instructor, he should have taken the steps necessary to ensure that the research included the appropriate citations.

In their comparative study of ethical beliefs of Master of Business Administration (MBA) students in the U.S. and in Hong Kong, Rawwas, Swaidan, and Isakson (2007) found differences

among MBA students in the U.S. and Hong Kong in regards to their tolerance and sensitivity towards academic dishonesty. In particular, Rawwas et al, (2007) found that Hong Kong MBA students were more tolerant of academic dishonesty than the U.S. MBA students, but both groups were strongly influenced by opportunism.

In today's society, students have much more access to information than they did in previous decades. In particular, the internet provides some very positive means of communicating, sharing ideas, and conducting research. However, with that, there are also negative aspects, such as the recent emergence of essay mills. According to Bartlett (2009), unlike online databases that could lead to the detection of plagiarism if students were to use the content and try to pass it as their own, certain essay mills have writers that create the new text to the student's specifications, for a per-page fee. One student identified in Bartlett's (2009) look into the company Essay Writers identified him or herself as a doctoral student in aerospace engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology hoping to purchase a 200-page dissertation. While the identity of the student was not confirmed, that of another student from American University's law school was, and according to Bartlett, the student's professor, being both surprised and disappointed at her choice to solicit the paper, gave her an "incomplete" for the course.   At least one of the graduate students identified in Bartlett's article did not see paying someone else to write an essay to be a serious problem. In fact, a student from James Madison University majoring in philosophy and religion defended his choice to pay someone else for academic work and made the comparison to companies that outsource labor. The only negative aspect of the student's experience with the company, according to Bartlett (2009), is that what he received from Essay Writers did not meet his expectations.

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Cheater Characteristics

Most prior research on cheating looks at the behavior from an individual perspective. Research such as that of Rettinger and Kramer (2009) found that cheaters are more extrinsically oriented based on self-reported data using the LOGO II 32-item scale (Eison et al., 1986). This extrinsic motivation is one of the factors associated with increased cheating and plagiarism (Rettinger and Kramer, 2009). Based on answers to free-response questions about the pressures that led respondents to consider cheating in a given situation, Harding, Carpenter, Finelli, and Passow (2004) found that many students do not view cheating as a means of excelling past others academically, but rather, view it as a solution to save time when completing assignments. These individuals may also hold neutralizing attitudes (Sykes and Matza, 1957) towards cheating behavior. As stated by Sykes and Matza (1957), "much delinquency is based on what is essentially an unrecognized extension of defenses to crimes, in the form of justifications for deviance that are seen as valid by the delinquent but not by the legal system or society at large" (p.666). Furthermore, disapproval that stems from internal or external forces in the "social environment" is "neutralized, turned back, or deflected in advance" (Sykes and Matza, 1957, p.667). Building on the research of Arthur Sutherland, Sykes and Matza (1957) identified five types of neutralization techniques, including the denial of responsibility, the denial of injury, the denial of the victim, the condemnation of the condemners, and the appeal to higher loyalties. As noted by Rettinger and Kramer (2009), there is a positive correlation between neutralizing attitudes and student cheating (Rettinger and Kramer, 2009, Haines et al., 1986; Pulvers and Kiekhoff, 1999). Students who have these neutralizing attitudes may rationalize their behavior, despite it being contrary to their ethical code (Rettiner and Kramer, 2009). These individuals

may blame external forces for their cheating behaviors (Rettiner and Kramer, 2009; Murdock and Stephens, 2007) and justify or neutralize their own cheating behaviors based on the fact that others around them in the academic culture are engaging in cheating behaviors, as well. This lends itself to the question of whether these individuals are truly overwhelmed by the pressure of meeting academic challenges or if they simply lack the motivation to take the steps necessary to succeed without cheating.

Academic Motivation

A person's motivation may impact his or her ability to do well academically, as well as the likelihood of whether that individual is willing to engage in acts of academic dishonesty. This is demonstrated in Rettinger, Jordan, and Peschiera's (2004) research using vignettes that included situations where the male college student had opportunities to engage in academic dishonesty. The researchers used the LOGO II (Eison et al., 1986) to measure the intrinsic orientation and extrinsic orientation of the study participants (Rettinger et al., 2004). Results of the study showed that eighty-three percent of the participants admitted to having cheated during their college career, with men being more likely to have cheated than women. However, reliable differences were not found between different academic classes, majors, or ethnic groups. Lupton and Chapman (2002), however, found that American and Russian college students pursuing degrees in business hold "vastly different attitudes, perceptions and tendencies towards cheating" (p.23). Similarly, Rawwas, Swaidan, and Isakson (2007) found significant differences among business students from the United States (attending a U.S. institution) and MBA students attending a university in Hong Kong, which further supports the need for additional studies

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looking at culture as a factor in regards to students' perceptions and definitions of appropriate

academic sharing and cheating (p.146). Based on their findings, the Hong Kong MBA students

showed less ethical sensitivity than did the U.S. MBA students. Furthermore, the Hong Kong

MBA students were "more tolerant, more detached, less theistic, more negative, and more

relativistic than were the U.S. MBA students" (p.155). As noted in the Rawwas et al. (2007)

study, opportunism plays a part in the abundance of academic dishonesty that occurs. They argue

that rather than trying to improve upon students' personal and religious beliefs and values, what

will be more successful to stop cheating is to make it more difficult to engage in the behavior in

the first place, and if students do engage in it, make the consequences well known and severe.

Although to the best of my knowledge these methods have not been assessed empirically,

to help cut down on opportunities for cheating, according to Rawwas et al. (2007), professors

"should be involved in a three-stage process to eradicate academic dishonesty". This three-stage

process involves professors (1) dispersing students in the class during examinations and making

multiple versions of the test, (2) increasing the cost of cheating by either increasing the

probability of getting caught or by "increasing the penalty or consequences of cheating", and (3)

keeping students well informed about the consequences of cheating (p. 155).

<u>Research Integrity</u>

The Council for Graduate Schools (2008) notes that leaders of U.S. graduate schools and

universities are justifiably concerned about the number of reported incidents of misconduct, the

patterns of the misbehavior, and the financial costs associated with the misbehavior (p.7). As

such, the responsible conduct of research (RCR) is a major focus of the Office of Research

Integrity, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Council of Graduate Schools. As outlined in *The Project for Scholarly Integrity in Graduate Education: A framework for collaborative action* (2008), many of the innovative approaches to the graduate education context have been piecemeal, and materials have ranged from "passive to minimally interactive" (p. 4). Therefore, they argue that there is a significant need for more concise workshops, ethics trainings, and so forth at the graduate level to address academic honesty and scholarly integrity.

According to Miller, Shoptaugh, and Woolridge (2011), in order to understand and successfully reduce cheating behaviors, it is important to examine the relations among self-reported cheating, the rationale for cheating, and the extent to which the students take responsibility for the promotion of academic integrity (p. 169). One of the main problems in studies pertaining to academic dishonesty, as noted by Miller et al. (2011) is the lack of agreement among investigators on what actually constitutes cheating behaviors. For example, they ask the question, "When a student submits a paper that was previously submitted for another course without knowledge of the instructor, is it cheating because the student did not complete the assignment of the instructor, is it cheating because the student did not complete the assignment of writing the paper for the course or is it not cheating because it is his or her own work?" (p. 170). Regardless, according to Miller et al. (2007), a lack of integrity has been demonstrated by the student.

Faculty Mentoring

While the decision to engage in cheating behaviors is ultimately that of the student, interactions with faculty and the mentoring students receive can certainly impact a student's academic motivation and the choices he or she makes. The interactions with and support a student receives from a faculty mentor also factors into the student's overall perception of the culture of the graduate program and in many cases, is a contributing factor to whether the student is successful. According to Gray and Jordan (2012), it is necessary to examine the role of faculty supervisors in "shaping student perceptions of academic integrity" (p. 299). The level of mentoring provided by a faculty supervisor varies person to person, but as Gray and Jordan (2012) note, faculty mentorship is an integral part of providing appropriate training to future scholars, scientists, and administrators (p. 301).

Taking Responsibility

Most research on academic dishonesty focuses on the individual. However, research such as that by McCabe and Makowski (2001) does suggest that giving students a more collective voice in regards to academic integrity policies on college campuses will give them more of a sense of ownership and responsibility for upholding those policies. They also advocate for increased student involvement on campus. Being more active within the campus community, it is presumed, will create a sense of community and help individuals to feel more as though they are a part of the academic culture rather than on the peripheral. However, this does not guarantee that the cheating situation will be deemed as morally relevant to the individual in all cases.

For students without a goal structure in place or "personal standards that are conducive to educational and moral success", punitive sanctions may be necessary to deter cheating (Miller et al., 2011, p.182). The threat of punishment or consequences if often used by educational institutions in hopes of reducing cheating (Miller et al., 2011). The anticipation of punishment alone, however, is not sufficient to trigger moral reasoning as the cause of the decision making (Miller, Shoptaugh, & Wooldridge, 2011; Bandura, 1990). As noted by Rettinger and Kramer (2008), understanding neutralizing attitudes is also needed to understand cheating behavior. Sykes and Matza (1957) defined neutralizing attitudes as "justifications for deviance that are seen as valid by the delinquent but not by the legal system or society at large" (Rettinger and Kramer, 2008; Sykes and Matza, 1957). More recently, this definition has been expanded upon to take external forces into consideration (Rettinger and Kramer, 2008, Murdock and Stephens, 2007). "Strategies such as blaming the teacher, the culture, or particular other students shift the attribution to others, thus neutralizing anti-cheating attitudes and facilitating cheating behaviors" (Rettinger & Kramer, 2008, p.295; Murdock and Stephens, 2007). A goal of mine while conducting this research study was to examine what it is about the academic culture that would result in students thinking it is acceptable, or hopefully, not acceptable, to engage in cheating behaviors. The goal is not to remove the responsibility from the individual and excuse them from blame, but rather, to understand what organizational factors affect the students.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Phenomenological Approach

The experiences that graduate students have within their academic environment help shape their ideologies and opinions on the culture of the graduate program. Exploring the experiences of graduate students through a phenomenological research approach helps give them a voice so that they may discuss their experiences, challenges, and the pressures they face, particularly in relation to those experiences that cause them to engage in, or consider engaging in, unethical academic behavior. The benefit of looking at this topic from a phenomenological perspective is that the focus is placed on the meanings and essences of the students' experiences and why they have these experiences rather than simply trying to determine whether graduate students engage in academic dishonesty. By asking study participants to describe their experiences in their graduate programs at the university, I hope to be able to provide a more clear understanding of how students define and understand appropriate academic sharing.

As Wallace and Wolf (1999) note, "Phenomenological sociologists study how people define their social situations once they have suspended or 'bracketed' their learned cultural notions" (p. 253). In regards to academic integrity, students may have their systems of ideas constructed in past interactions, for example, and have them sustained by "present ongoing interaction" (p. 253). Therefore, when conducting research on perceptions of academic honesty, it is important to consider a person's past experiences and notions and take those into account along with their present situation as it pertains to the topic. Relevant information can then be extracted from the narratives and emerging themes can be categorized. As Singelton, Straits, and

Straits (1993) point out, the phenomenological school of thought emphasizes the importance of understanding the subject's point of view. However, along with that point of view, it is also necessary to take into account the "subject's view of social reality" (p. 37).

Perceptions of what constitutes appropriate academic sharing and academic honesty in general are subjective and depend on the views of the person being asked. As Singleton, Straits, and Straits (1993) note, social scientists "deal with human beings who give meaning to their every action" (p. 36). In the case of academic honesty, it is important to understand how the person views his or her place within the academic setting. By using a phenomenological approach to understanding graduate students' definitions and understanding of appropriate academic sharing, we gain a better understanding of the person's perspective and overall frame of reference as it pertains to his or her experiences with ethical decision-making in graduate education.

As previously noted, exploring the experiences of graduate students through a phenomenological research approach helps give the individuals a platform for discussing their experiences, challenges, and the pressures they face while pursuing their graduate education. The benefit of looking at this topic from a phenomenological approach is that the focus is placed on the meanings and essences of the students' experiences.

<div align="center">Researcher Positionality Statement</div>

During the course of this research study, I was completing my doctoral degree, working full-time in the university's College of Graduate Studies, and teaching as an adjunct instructor. Prior to beginning the study I thought through how my personal experiences as a graduate

student and my role as an employee at the university influenced my perspectives on the subject matter. As a result, I took steps to ensure that as the researcher, I did not influence participants and that I did not introduce bias myself. All communications to participants were done through my student email address and the research conducted was in no way connected to my role as an employee with the university. As the study was being conducted, I worked with my major professor to ensure that my position did not impact the data interpretation.

Data Collection

This study took place at the University of Central Florida, a large multi-campus metropolitan research university with more than 58,000 students at the time the research study was conducted. During the Fall 2012 semester, the university's total enrollment rose to 57,043 including a graduate population of 8,110 ("UCF Pegasus Mine Portal," 2014).

This study uses a mixed method research approach. Through the use of both open-and closed-ended questions and two forms of data collection, I learned about the challenges graduate students face in graduate education and their definitions and understanding of appropriate academic sharing. I first gathered data via a self-administered online questionnaire and then conducted individual semi-structured face-to-face interviews.

Graduate student participation in the online survey and face-to-face interviews was completed voluntarily by the students. Prior to administering the survey to the graduate student population, I piloted it with a small group of graduate students who agreed to take the sample survey and provide feedback. Once the results were submitted and it was determined that the questions were clear and written in such a way that the average graduate student could

understand them, I sent an initial email out from my official university student email account to 7,771 active graduate students at the university with information about the anonymous online survey. Only degree-seeking graduate students were contacted for participation; graduate certificate only and non-degree seeking graduate students were excluded from the sample. It was disclosed in the email that the survey relates to the challenges graduate students face and ethical decision-making practices in graduate education. A survey link was included and my contact information was provided in the event that participants had questions.

A follow-up email was sent to all potential participants reminding individuals of the survey link that was sent to them a few weeks prior and once again, describing the purpose of the study. A statement regarding the importance of receiving survey results that include responses from a diverse population of international and domestic graduate students was also added to the communication. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the survey responses were not linked to email addresses, so all possible participants received each notice. A statement was included in the reminder thanking those who have already completed the survey, and those who have not had an opportunity to take the survey were asked to so by a stated deadline. The survey link was provided again.

The final survey question asked if the participant is interested in participating in a face-to-face interview (phase II of this study) to discuss his or her experiences with graduate education at the university. Students indicated either "yes" or "no" and if interested, were asked to email the researcher at the campus email address provided.

Individuals who were interested in participating in face-to-face interviews sent me an email. The participants who contacted me via email were sent a response thanking them for being willing to participate and arrangements were made to conduct the interviews. All interviews were conducted in public locations that were agreed upon by the participant.

Quantitative Measurements and Instrumentation (Online Survey)

A web-based, cross-sectional anonymous survey was used for the first phase of data collection. The survey measured students' attitudes toward academic dishonesty, the effect an academic discipline has on perceptions of academic achievement, perceptions of faculty's ethical decision making, overall challenges faced by graduate students, and finally, questions aimed specifically at identifying differences based on culture. The online survey results produced descriptive statistics to be introduced in conjunction with discussions of the qualitative data collection phase of the study.

The online survey component of this study was conducted using SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com). I purchased a subscription to the site that allowed for the creation and management of a survey that could receive unlimited responses and that provided ample ways to export the data. This survey manager also provided the necessary security to ensure the anonymity of the participants. Individuals were asked to participate in the survey via an email explaining the details of the survey.

The data gathered in Phase I provides details related to cheating behaviors, attitudes towards academic dishonesty, the effects of an academic discipline on academic achievement, and the overall challenges students face in graduate school. While all of this information is useful within the study analysis, the responses were most helpful in shaping the semi-structured interview questions in the second phase of the study. Because I was approaching this study from a phenomenological perspective, one of my main goals was to have in-depth conversations with the participants to find out about their personal experiences. The first phase of this study helped inform me of some of the major challenges facing students, thereby giving me some of the key information that I needed to make the best use of the limited time I had with each participant during the interviews.

A web-based, cross-sectional survey through SurveyMonkey was the preferred method for data collection due to the advantages the method provides. Such advantages include the ability to widely distribute the survey to a large number of participants, the convenience and low cost of administering a survey via the web, and the possibility of a quick turnaround in data collection.

I created a survey with thirty-three questions. The survey questions starting broadly to find out more about graduate students' experiences and the stress they experience, while the latter questions focus more on issues of ethical behavior. See *Appendix A* for the complete survey.

Qualitative Measurements and Instrumentation (Interviews)

The second phase of the study involved confidential face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with graduate students who were enrolled at the university in the current semester or within one prior semester. Participants were asked about their experiences in graduate school and the culture of the program, whether they found the program academically challenging, how they defined academic dishonesty, whether they have witnessed students or faculty engaging in what they would consider academic dishonesty, how information technology has changed the culture of education, and whether their faculty are good mentors.

Each interview participant agreed to have the discussion recorded, which aided in the transcription process. The researcher used a digital recorder to record the interviews, and then transcribed each interview using Microsoft Word 2010. All audio files and transcriptions were stored securely with the researcher. The computer used to transcribe the data requires a secure login and has up-to-date virus software.

The second phase of the study involved a total of fifteen confidential face-to-face interviews with fourteen currently enrolled graduate students and one master's student who graduated within one semester of the interview, but who was an enrolled graduate student during the first phase of the study. Specific questions for the interviews developed from the data collected during the online survey. Open-ended interview questions were administered to participants to address the challenges they face within their academic environment. Specific questions were also aimed at learning more about the participants' opinions and definitions of

academic dishonesty, as well as their perceptions of the disciplines they are pursuing and the ease or difficulty of academic achievement within those programs.

Interview Questions

I conducted semi-structured interviews with audio transcription. To learn more about students' definitions and understanding of appropriate academic sharing, I conducted fifteen interviews, each lasting between thirty minutes and one hour. Each interview participant was asked a set of pre-determined questions that are listed in the following paragraph. In some cases, the conversation prompted additional questions to be asked, which will be noted as necessary in this study findings. The interview questions began more general in order to learn about the individual's previous academic and professional experience and were then geared more specifically towards the challenges of graduate education and definitions of academic dishonesty. The interview questions included:

1. Please tell me about your academic and professional experience before starting your graduate program.

2. How would you characterize your experience during your graduate program? What are some things that affected your experience?

3. Do you find your graduate program academically challenging? If not, why not?
   - How do you work to overcome those challenges?
   - Are the program's expectations for students reasonable?

4. How would you define academic dishonesty?

5. Have you witnessed students engaging in what you would consider to be academic dishonesty related to their graduate education?
   - Do you think the behavior is justified? If so, why?

6. Have you seen any evidence that information technology has changed how students work?

7. Does the culture of your program promote ethical decision making?
   - Have you experienced anything during your graduate program that has changed your opinions about appropriate academic sharing? If so, in what ways?

8. Have you witnessed any of your faculty engaging in academic dishonesty? If yes, how has this influenced your perception(s) of that person and your graduate program as a whole?

9. Are your program's faculty members good mentors to their students?
   - Have you sought help from your academic advisor or a faculty member? If so, was it a positive experience for you?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about academic dishonesty or your experience during your graduate program?

Phase I Procedures

The quantitative data collection portion of this study relates to the first phase of the research. Participants were solicited through a sample of active domestic and international graduate students enrolled in degree-seeking programs (doctoral, master's, or specialist) at the university, thereby producing a sample that is representative of the graduate student population. Students enrolled as non-degree seeking or in certificate programs only did not qualify for participation in the study and were not included in the sample.

Graduate students that qualified for inclusion within the sample were sent an email from the researcher soliciting participation in the survey and outlining the general purpose of the

study. The survey link was included in the email. I sent one follow-up contact to the possible

respondents as a reminder for individuals to partake in the survey.

<u>Phase I Analysis</u>

The quantitative portion of the study enabled me to address the research question

regarding the differences that currently exist among graduate students with regard to perceived

opportunity to engage in academic dishonesty, student attitudes, and definitions of appropriate

academic sharing. Of the 7,771 graduate students that were requested to participate in the study,

1,304 students responded. I analyzed the descriptive statistics gathered via the online surveys to

provide a summary of the results. To analyze the online survey data, the researcher first removed

responses from individuals who stated that they are not 18 years of age or older. This resulted in

a sample of 1,299 responses available for analysis.

<u>Phase II Procedures</u>

In-person interviews took place at public locations that were agreed upon by both the

respondent(s) and the interviewer. The interviews took place on the university campus in rooms

suitable for personal interviews. No interviews were conducted at personal dwellings. Those

who agreed to take part in the study were fully informed of the details of the study and the

intentions of the researcher and were briefed on the informed consent process. Each interview

participant was asked to agree to a waiver of documentation of consent prior to the interview.

The identity of the participants will remain anonymous, and pseudonyms will be used in the

report. To get more insight into respondents' experiences within their graduate careers, I

transcribed the participant interviews and have included relevant details in the study's findings.

Phase II Analysis

While the first phase of the study addressed the differences that exist among graduate students with regard to perceived opportunity to engage in academic dishonesty, student attitudes, and definitions of appropriate academic sharing, the purpose of the second phase of the study was to collect qualitative data through detailed, thick descriptions, including personal narratives and quotations from the participants. Collecting data in this manner enabled me to address the remaining research questions. I aimed to ensure that all data included within the study is credible and that respondents answer honestly during the interviews. As a graduate student myself, I took a stance of empathetic neutrality in regards to the challenges graduate students face, and included personal experiences or insight as part of the relevant data, while passing no judgment on whatever content emerged during the interviews.

Participants

Survey Participants

The quantitative methods of this study included a single-stage sampling procedure. Potential respondents for the study were drawn from a purposive sample of 7,771 active graduate students (students who have enrolled within the last three semesters). Individuals enrolled as non-degree seeking or in graduate certificates only were excluded from the sample. My goal was to receive responses to the online survey from students in each of the university's academic colleges. Of the 7,771 potential respondents, 17% (N=1,299) completed the survey.

Access to the sampling data was granted by the Dean of the University of Central Florida's College of Graduate Studies. Names were not included on the report used to

communicate with the possible participants. The student's campus email address, program, and current enrollment (credit hours only) were included on the report so that a request could be made only to qualifying graduate students to participate in the online survey.

Participation in the study was completely voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to beginning the survey using an online consent form. Participants were requested to click within a check box after reading the consent form to acknowledge their consent.

Interview Participants

All interview participants completed the online survey associated with this study. Online survey participants were asked if they were interested in participating in a face-to-face interview (the second phase of this study) to discuss their experiences with graduate education at the university. If so, they were instructed to please email the researcher at the email address provided.

After completing the online survey, forty-four individuals contacted me via email. I responded to each person and when applicable, thanked them for their willingness to take part in the interview process of the study. My goal was to have a diverse sample of both master's and doctoral students representing an array of disciplines. I also wanted to meet with the students in person, which narrowed the pool due to the student's availability. Sixteen individuals were initially scheduled for interviews. Of the sixteen individuals who were scheduled for interviews, fifteen were ultimately able to meet with me.

The qualitative portion of the study took place during the second phase of data collection following the conclusion of the online survey. To conduct the interviews, I responded to graduate students who, after completing the online survey, emailed with an interest in participating in a face-to-face interview. I responded to all interested students thanking them for their willingness to participate in the interview. Ultimately, I selected a stratified sample of doctoral, master's, and specialist students from across various disciplines at the university to interview.

Interview Participant Profiles

The face-to-face interviews conducted were with students from six colleges and a total of fourteen disciplines at the university, including Anthropology, Applied Learning Education, Applied Sociology, Business, Chemistry, Computer Science, Conservation Biology, Creative Writing, Industrial Engineering, Interpersonal Communication, Marriage and Family Therapy, Nursing, Social Work, and Texts and Technology. The following section provides the details that each participant shared about him/herself in regards to his/her background and educational and/or professional goals. The names of the participants have been changed and some details have been omitted to protect anonymity.

Participant 1: Maria Mead is a master's student in the university's Anthropology MA program, which is offered by the university's College of Sciences. As an undergraduate student, Maria had regrettably made a decision to keep her laptop open in a class during a bonus quiz. According to her, the instructor said to put all books away, but did not mention laptops. So, Maria decided to use Google the find the term that students were asked to define and write down

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what she found on Wikipedia. She wrote down her answer and submitted her quiz thinking that she had "outsmarted the professor". Maria then received an email from the professor regarding the incident because the definition of the term that she had provided did not relate to the time period of history that they were discussing in the course, and in fact, happened 20 years later. Maria was admittedly very embarrassed and hysterical and "cried and called the professor" and apologized. The instructor deducted points off of Maria's final grade and she was given a letter of reprimand. In the interview, Maria expressed embarrassment for her actions and stated that the experience changed how she conducts herself in graduate school.

Participant 2: Julia Dewey is a recent graduate of the university's Applied Learning and Instruction MA program in the College of Education. Julia is a non-traditional student in that she was out of school for about twenty years before going back for her master's. She began her career as a first grade teacher and then transitioned to working with her family's business. She was drawn to the Applied Learning and Instruction MA program because of its broad application to different areas of education. Her interests were not limited to one specific part of education so she appreciated that the program fit her learning objectives.

Participant 3: Olivia Tisdell is a student in the College of Education's Applied Learning and Instruction MA program. Prior to entering the program, Olivia had aspirations of becoming a lawyer and enrolled in law school. After deciding that law school was not where she wanted to be, Olivia entered the Applied Learning and Instruction MA program.

Participant 4: Grace Meier is a student in the Applied Sociology MA program, which is offered by the College of Sciences. Grace's undergraduate studies focused on

interpersonal/organizational communication. Her undergraduate mentor encouraged her to learn

how to do basic types of research methodology and to get some research experience. As a result,

Grace conducted an independent study and completed some ethnographies and other types of

research at the undergraduate level. The Applied Sociology MA program aligns with Grace's

personal research interests in the sociology of religion.

Participant 5: Zoe Nooyi is a student in the Business Administration PhD program, Marketing

track, which is offered by the College of Business Administration. She had been working full-

time for five years when she had her first child and decided that she wanted to go back to school

while she cared for her daughter. Zoe completed her Master's in Business Administration

(MBA) and then went back into the workforce. It was during her MBA that she was approached

by professors about the fact that she should teach. The idea sounded good to her, but since she

had finished her MBA, she wanted to work to pay for it. After a couple of years of trying to

balance family and work, she realized it would be hard to progress without sacrificing the time

she wanted to have with her child, so she began to seriously consider an academic career. Her

focus became on how she was going to manage her life and be happy. Zoe had been receiving

mailings from the *The PhD Project*, an organization that was established by the KPMG

Foundation with a vision of increasing the pool of highly qualified minorities in positions in

management. Each year, she received a mailing that asked her if she saw herself as a professor.

The idea was sounding good, so she applied to attend a conference to find out more. When she

went to the conference, Zoe met her connection to this institution. She already had the

University of Central Florida in mind, although she had completed her undergraduate and

graduate degrees at other institutions, but connecting with the individual at the conference and

hearing about how she had raised a family and the fact that the two had a lot in common solidified Zoe's choice to attend this institution.

Participant 6: Cooper Curie is a student in the Chemistry PhD program, which is housed in the College of Sciences. Cooper has a bachelor's degree in Chemistry from outside of Florida. At his undergraduate institution, Cooper was able to do a lot of research that he believes prepared him to join a doctoral program without first obtaining a master's degree. He went straight from his bachelor's to his doctoral program and believes that he was able to have a more streamlined educational career because of his undergraduate research experience.

Participant 7: Kayla Greene is a student in the Communications MA, Interpersonal Communication track, which is offered by the College of Sciences. Kayla did not transition into graduate school directly from her undergraduate career. She took a year off to decide what path she would like to take. She knew she wanted to go to graduate school, but was not certain which degree to pursue. She is drawn to people and talking and decided she wanted to learn more about communication and the reasons why we are told to say things a certain way. She currently does not see a clearly defined career path for her degree. She chose to attend this university because of her previous undergraduate experience at the institution and the connections she had made with the faculty.

Participant 8: Max Jobs is a student in the Computer Science PhD program, which is offered by the College of Engineering and Computer Science. Max received his undergraduate degree and master's degree at different universities, both outside of Florida. In addition to his educational

experiences at the university, he has also gained several years of working experience related to programming.

Participant 9: Charlotte Wilcox is a student in the Conservation Biology PhD, which is offered by the College of Sciences. She did her undergraduate work outside of UCF and took a year off following the completion of her bachelor's degree to figure out what she wanted to do in terms of graduate education. She left her undergraduate institution for a different school and then continued to UCF as a doctoral student. She was interested in UCF because she felt that a particular faculty member at the institution is the best in the country in the field of study.

Participant 10: Riley Gray is a student in the Marriage and Family Therapy MA, which is offered by the College of Education. Riley began her undergraduate studies at another university and transferred to UCF to complete her degree. She then transitioned into graduate school at the university.

Participant 11: Hannah Steele is a student in the Creative Writing MFA program, a terminal degree offered by the College of Arts and Humanities. Hannah's focus during her undergraduate studies was on a discipline within the hard sciences, but she made a transition with only a few classes left from earning her degree to change her minor in English – Creative Writing into her major. She was not happy in her field of study and says that changing programs was the best decision that she had ever made. However, she is happy to have had a fairly strong experience in physics and engineering. She took part in an Engineering Expo at her undergraduate institution and took on a Vice President position within the student organization. In addition, she was the president of a martial arts club at her school. Hannah is used to doing a great deal of academic

work alongside extracurricular activities. According to Hannah, "I always say I am going to say 'no' to things, and I say 'no' to some things, but I say 'yes' to other things, like I am here today."

Participant 12: Sarah Iacocca is a student in the Industrial Engineering PhD program, which is offered by the College of Engineering and Computer Science. She completed her undergraduate degree at a small private college and is currently an officer in the military. She is working on her doctoral degree so that she can transition into her faculty position with a military institution. Sarah's graduate education is supported financially by the United States government.

Participant 13: Brooke Nightingale is a student in the Nursing MSN, Nurse Educator track, which is offered by the College of Nursing. Brooke has several years of experience in the health care industry, including her current position as a nurse educator, as well as time spent as an Emergency Management Technician (EMT), a paramedic, and a home health aide.

Participant 14: Karen Abbott is a student in the Social Work MSW program, offered by the College of Health and Public Affairs. Karen completed her undergraduate degree in Sociology outside of Florida. She has been working in her field of child protection since 1990. Karen has enjoyed working in child protection, but is not particularly in favor of the fact that privatization of the agencies has made it so that every three to five years, groups rebid or negotiate their contract. According to Karen, many supervisors in her field have their master's degrees, so she wanted to get her graduate degree to be in a better position in the event that her current employer does not get re-awarded their contract. Ultimately, Karen would like to be a counselor.

Participant 15: David Frost is a student in the Texts and Technology PhD program, which is offered by the College of Arts and Humanities. He stays very busy with his graduate studies and

does not consider himself to be an overly social person. David has high school teaching experience and a master's degree from the university's College of Education. He was awarded funding from the university, which requires him to attend full-time. His teaching focus has now shifted from high school students to the undergraduate student population at the university.

<u>Study Limitations</u>

This research included a sample of domestic and international graduate students from the research site only. While the university has a population of over 8,000 graduate students, multiple survey sites in various areas of the U.S. would be ideal to increase the generalizability of the results.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The research for this study took place in two phases. I completed the anonymous online survey portion of this dissertation research in May 2012, which included participation by 1,299 active graduate students in all of the university's eleven colleges with graduate programs. In the summer of 2012, fifteen interviews were conducted. The following section contains a summary of the study results, including a discussion of the themes that emerged from the online survey data and the interviews.

Phase I: Online Survey Results

The online survey component of this study included responses from 1,299 qualified participants. Respondents who began the survey but left the majority of questions unanswered were not included in the results, leaving a total of 1,250 participant results for evaluation. While it was not the case for the majority of individuals who completed the survey, some respondents were pursuing a degree in more than one college at the university. Any individual who identified as being a graduate student in more than one college (pursuing multiple degrees at the institution) was included as a respondent in each of the colleges they identified.

Demographics

Responses were received from a diverse population of domestic and international students from all of the university's eleven colleges. Sixty-six percent (n=798) of respondents identified as female, 33% (n=402) of respondents were male, and less than 1% (n=3) of

respondents identified as transgender. Furthermore, 11% of the population selected

Hispanic/Latino as their ethnicity.

In Spring 2012, the university had a total of 8,110 full and part-time graduate students, including those in non-degree seeking and graduate certificate programs. Of the graduate student population, nearly 59% (n= 4,745) identified as White, approximately 9% (n=749) identified as Black/African American, and nearly 11% (n=862) listed Hispanic/Latino as their ethnicity. With regard to gender, the graduate student population included 59% (n=4,758) women and approximately 41% (n=3,352) men. In terms of overall headcount, the College of Education had the greatest graduate enrollment, totaling nearly 23% (n=1,864), followed by the College of Health and Public Affairs with approximately 21% (n=1,686), the College of Engineering and Computer Science with 16% (n=1,281), the College of Business with nearly 10% (n=806) and the College of Sciences with nearly 10% (n=799). The remaining 20% of the graduate population was spread among the College of Arts and Humanities with approximately 6% (n=497), the College of Nursing with 5% (n=417), the College of Graduate Studies with nearly 2% (n=144), the College of Medicine with less than 1% (n=46), the College of Optics and Photonics with nearly 1% (n=116), and the Rosen College of Hospitality Management with approximately 1% (n=100). An additional 4% (n=354) of graduate students were enrolled as non-degreed seeking students.

While the participation in this study was not a precise match for the university's overall demographics, the survey results included the most respondents from the university's colleges with the greatest graduate enrollment, beginning with the College of Education, followed by the

College of Health and Public Affairs, with higher response rate from females versus males.

Furthermore, 11% (n=136) of the respondents identified as Hispanic/Latino. See *Table 1:*

Demographics for a summary of demographics by gender.

Table 1: Demographics

Subject	Female Number	% of total sample	Male Number	% of total sample	Transgender Number	% of total sample
RACE						
Total sample	**798**	**66%**	**402**	**33%**	**3**	**0.25%**
White	633	53%	298	25%	2	0.17%
Black or African American	73	6%	18	1%	0	0.00%
American Indian and Alaska Native	2	0%	2	0%	0	0.00%
Asian	43	4%	44	4%	0	0.00%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	2	0%	1	0%	1	0.08%
Other race	44	4%	35	3%	0	0.00%
No response	0	0%	4	0%	0	0.00%
HISPANIC OR LATINO						
Total sample	**798**	**66%**	**402**	**33%**	**3**	**0.25%**
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	87	7%	49	4%	1	0.10%
Not Hispanic or Latino	705	59%	351	29%	2	0.20%
No response	6	0%	2	0%	0	0.00%

Subject	Female Number	% of total sample	Male Number	% of total sample	Transgender Number	% of total sample
UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP						
Total sample	**798**	**66%**	**402**	**33%**	**3**	**0.25%**
Asylee	1	0%	2	0%	0	0.00%
Native	650	54%	300	25%	2	0.17%
Naturalized	76	6%	29	2%	0	0.00%
Permanent Resident Alien	28	2%	15	1%	1	0.08%
Temporary Resident (International Student)	39	3%	56	5%	0	0.00%
No response	4	0%	0	0%	0	0.00%
AGE						
Total sample	**798**	**66%**	**402**	**33%**	**3**	**0.25%**
18-25	295	25%	126	10%	1	0.10%
26-33	256	21%	145	12%	1	0.10%
34-41	104	9%	69	6%	1	0.10%
42 or older	140	12%	61	5%	0	0.00%
No response	3	0%	1	0%	0	0.00%

Participation by College

The University of Central Florida has eleven colleges, including the College of Arts and Humanities (CAH), the College of

Business Administration (CBA), the College of Education (CED), the College of Engineering and Computer Science (CECS), the

College of Graduate Studies (CGS), the College of Health and Public Affairs (COHPA), the Rosen College of Hospitality Management (RCHM), the College of Medicine (COM) (for the purposes of this study, students enrolled in the College of Medicine MD program housed within this college were not surveyed), the College of Nursing (CON), the College of Optics and Photonics (OPTICS), and the College of Sciences (COS). Most respondents (67.2%) were pursuing a master's or specialist degree, with an additional 30.9% pursuing doctoral degrees and 1.8% seeking both a master's and doctoral degree concurrently. The College of Education had the most survey participants (24.5%), followed by the College of Health and Public Affairs (19.8%). However, all eleven colleges are represented in the results. Students who identified as being enrolled in multiple colleges are included in the results for any college indicated. See *Table 2: Participation by College* for a breakdown of participation in the study by college.

Table 2: Participation by College

Subject	Female	% of total sample	Male	% of total sample	Transgender	% of total sample	All Sexes/ Genders	% of total sample
	Number		Number		Number		Number	
COLLEGE								
Total sample	**821**	**66%**	**416**	**34%**	**3**	**< 1%**	**1240**	**100.00%**
Arts and Humanities	66	5%	32	3%	1	0.10%	99	8.00%
Business Administration	54	4%	45	4%	1	0.10%	100	8.10%
Education	248	20%	56	5%	0	0.00%	304	**24.50%**
Engineering and Computer Science	51	4%	113	9%	0	0.00%	164	13.20%
Graduate Studies	42	3%	13	1%	0	0.00%	55	4.40%
Health and Public Affairs	178	14%	67	5%	1	0.10%	246	19.80%
Hospitality Management	16	1%	3	0%	0	0.00%	19	1.50%
Medicine	5	0%	3	0%	0	0.00%	8	0.60%
Nursing	55	4%	5	0%	0	0.00%	60	4.80%
Optics and Photonics	3	0%	12	1%	0	0.00%	15	1.20%
Sciences	103	8%	67	5%	0	0.00%	170	13.70%
ACADEMIC LEVEL								
Total sample	**790**	**66%**	**397**	**33%**	**3**	**< 1%**	**1190**	**100.00%**
Doctoral	216	18%	152	13%	0	0.00%	368	30.90%
Master's or Specialist	560	47%	237	20%	3	0.30%	800	**67.20%**
Both Master's and Doctoral	14	1%	8	1%	0	0.00%	22	1.80%

Challenges of Graduate School

I was interested in finding out whether students in different disciplines vary greatly in their views on the workload of their graduate program and whether or not financial struggles are more or less likely to occur for students in specific colleges. The satisfaction the respondents feel with the mentoring they receive from their academic advisor and their ability to balance graduate school and their personal relationships was also of interest. Overall, students in most colleges indicated that they found the workload in their graduate courses manageable at least occasionally, with the Rosen College of Hospitality Management producing the highest percentage (70%) of respondents frequently finding the workload in their graduate courses

manageable. Also interesting was the fact that the majority of respondents (80%) in the College

of Optics and Photonics never struggle financially to pay for graduate school, while overall, 53%

(n=132) of respondents in the College of Health and Public Affairs struggle financially very

frequently or frequently. While it may be worth exploring why this is the case for these students,

it is important to note that the sample size for the College of Optics and Photonics respondents to

the question was small (n=15) in comparison to the College of Health and Public Affairs

(n=247). However, these numbers are relative, since the College of Optics and Photonics had a

total of 116 enrolled graduate students in Spring 2012, while the College of Health and Public

Affairs had 1,686 enrolled graduate students in Spring 2012 ("UCF Pegasus Mine Portal," 2014).

See *Table 3*: *Challenges of Graduate School, COHPA and OPTICS* for a comparison of

responses from students in both colleges.

Table 3: Challenges of Graduate School, COHPA and OPTICS

Challenges of Graduate School	No. of Responses **Very frequently**	% College Sample	No. of Responses **Frequently**	% College Sample	No. of Responses **Occasionally**	% College Sample	No. of Responses **Rarely**	% College Sample	No. of Responses **Never**	% College Sample
HEALTH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS (COHPA)										
I generally find the workload in my graduate courses manageable.	23	9%	116	**47%**	97	39%	10	4%	2	1%
I feel overwhelmed by the research requirements of my graduate program.	12	5%	27	11%	121	**49%**	72	29%	16	6%
I struggle financially to pay for graduate school.	70	**28%**	62	25%	60	24%	29	12%	26	11%
I find it difficult to balance graduate school and my personal relationships.	34	14%	68	28%	86	**35%**	41	17%	18	7%
I am satisfied with the level of mentoring that I receive from my academic advisor.	18	7%	52	21%	57	23%	70	**29%**	47	19%
OPTICS AND PHOTONICS (OPTICS)										
I generally find the workload in my graduate courses manageable.	2	13%	9	**60%**	4	27%	0	0%	0	0%
I feel overwhelmed by the research requirements of my graduate program.	0	0%	2	13%	10	**67%**	3	20%	0	0%
I struggle financially to pay for graduate school.	1	7%	0	0%	1	7%	1	7%	12	**80%**
I find it difficult to balance graduate school and my personal relationships.	0	0%	4	27%	4	27%	5	**33%**	2	13%
I am satisfied with the level of mentoring that I receive from my academic advisor.	2	13%	6	**40%**	5	33%	2	13%	0	0%

Effects of Academic Discipline on Perceptions of Academic Dishonesty

In order to have a better understanding of the differing experiences of graduate students in various disciplines and how their experiences impact their opinions on academic integrity, I asked respondents of the online survey to answer questions that I believe relate specifically to their experiences in their particular graduate program. Interestingly, survey participants from the university's College of Medicine had the highest percentage (100%) of respondents stating that their academic program is more challenging than most other programs at the university. However, it is important to note that the sample for the College of Medicine was very small (n=8) in comparison to other disciplines. Similarly, responses from students in the College of Optics and Photonics responded that they believe that their program is more challenging than most other programs at the university. In fact, 27% (n=4) strongly agreed and 67% (n=10) agreed that the Optics program is more challenging academically than other graduate programs at the university. Responses from students in the College of Arts and Humanities (CAH) resulted in 59% (n=57) of respondents from that college disagreeing that their academic program is more challenging than most other programs at the university, and 2% (n=2) strongly disagreeing. Similarly, 70% (n=70) of the College of Business Administration (CBA) respondents indicated that they disagreed with the fact that their program is more challenging than others, with 15% (n=15) strongly disagreeing with the statement.

Attitudes Towards Academic Dishonesty

Common themes arose in both phases of this study regarding traditional forms of cheating. When asked to define academic dishonesty in the face-to-face interview, most interviewees named plagiarism, cheating on exams, or fabricating research data as forms of academic dishonesty. On the online survey, the majority of respondents stated that they had rarely, if ever, engaged in traditional forms of cheating. However, some students (n=43) agreed or strongly agreed that it is understandable for graduate students to falsify their research data because of the pressures to publish the research. See *Table 4: Traditional Forms of Cheating* for a breakdown of responses from doctoral and master's students related to traditional forms of cheating and *Table 5: Falsifying Research* for a breakdown of responses, by college, to the question related to falsifying research.

Table 4: Traditional Forms of Cheating

Traditional Forms of Cheating	Number of Responses Never	% of College Sample	Occasionally	% of College Sample	Rarely	% of College Sample	Frequently	% of College Sample
Doctoral Students								
I have submitted someone else's academic work and claimed it as my own.	375	**96%**	2	1%	12	3%		0%
I have used someone else's words or ideas in an assignment without acknowledging the source.	294	**75%**	8	2%	88	22%	1	0%
Master's Students								
I have submitted someone else's academic work and claimed it as my own.	794	**96%**	2	0%	28	3%		0%
I have used someone else's words or ideas in an assignment without acknowledging the source.	612	**74%**	19	2%	192	23%	1	0%

Table 5: Falsification of Research

	Number of Responses	% of College Sample		% of College Sample		% of College Sample		% of College Sample		% of College Sample
It is understandable for graduate students to falsify their research data because of the pressures to publish the research.	**Strongly Agree**		**Agree**		**Disagree**		**Strongly Disagree**		**Never**	
College of Arts and Humanities			2	2%	13	13%	18	18%	66	**67%**
College of Business Administration			1	1%	13	13%	19	19%	67	**67%**
College of Education			5	2%	51	17%	69	23%	179	**59%**
College of Engineering and Computer Science	4	2%	6	4%	18	11%	42	26%	94	**57%**
College of Graduate Studies			1	2%	8	15%	15	27%	31	**56%**
College of Health and Public Affairs	2	1%	8	3%	29	12%	44	18%	165	**67%**
Rosen College of Hospitality Management			1	5%	1	5%	7	37%	10	**53%**
College of Medicine	1	13%			2	25%	2	25%	3	**38%**
College of Nursing	1	2%	1	2%	5	8%	7	12%	46	**77%**
College of Optics and Photonics					1	7%	4	27%	10	**67%**
College of Sciences	2	1%	8	5%	8	5%	42	24%	112	**65%**

In addition to views on traditional forms of cheating, respondents to the online survey were asked about their attitudes towards academic dishonesty. Results show that 20% (n=79) of doctoral student respondents and 19% (n=157) of master's student respondents agree or strongly agree that most students use unauthorized course materials on assignments in online courses, even if the resources are not permitted by the instructor. See *Table 6: Attitudes Towards Academic Dishonesty – Doctoral* and *Table 7: Attitudes Towards Academic Dishonesty – Master's* for a breakdown of results by academic level.

Table 6: Attitudes Towards Academic Dishonesty – Doctoral

	Number of Responses	% of Sample		% of Sample		% of Sample		% of Sample
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
Doctoral Students								
Most students use unauthorized course materials on assignments in online courses, even if the resources are not permitted by the instructor.	11	3%	68	17%	209	**53%**	94	24%
In graduate school, it is acceptable to collaborate on assignments, even if the work is supposed to be completed independently.	4	1%	57	15%	169	**43%**	162	41%
Graduate students who are caught cheating should have the offense listed on their university transcript.	78	20%	169	**43%**	115	29%	27	7%
Universities should require ethics training for all graduate students who are involved in research.	150	38%	183	**47%**	47	12%	11	3%
If I knew that someone cheated on an assignment, I would inform the instructor.	34	9%	124	32%	211	**54%**	20	5%

Table 7: Attitudes Towards Academic Dishonesty – Master's

	Number of Responses	% of Sample		% of Sample		% of Sample		% of Sample
	Strongly Agree		**Agree**		**Disagree**		**Strongly Disagree**	
Master's Students								
Most students use unauthorized course materials on assignments in online courses, even if the resources are not permitted by the instructor.	28	3%	129	16%	451	**55%**	203	25%
In graduate school, it is acceptable to collaborate on assignments, even if the work is supposed to be completed independently.	12	1%	115	14%	342	41%	356	**43%**
Graduate students who are caught cheating should have the offense listed on their university transcript.	139	17%	390	**47%**	241	29%	50	6%
Universities should require ethics training for all graduate students who are involved in research.	234	28%	453	**55%**	109	13%	27	3%
If I knew that someone cheated on an assignment, I would inform the instructor.	65	8%	277	34%	426	**52%**	54	7%

Mentoring

Online survey respondents were asked whether they are satisfied with the level of mentoring that they receive from their academic advisor. Of the 1,243 who responded to the question, only 40% (n=501) were frequently or very frequently satisfied. The remaining 60% (n=742) responded as being rarely, occasionally, or never satisfied. More in-depth responses were obtained during the interview portion of the study. In fact, some of the interview respondents indicated that they received a substantial amount of mentoring from their faculty. Riley is a student in the Marriage and Family Therapy master's program,

which is a professional program that incorporates mentoring from the doctoral students in the

program. Because she is in a program that requires clinical supervision and mentoring, her

situation is somewhat unique. Riley shared the following:

> Because they are counselors, most of them are really, really approachable. In clinicals we get paired up with someone for practicum, so last semester I didn't relate very well to my mentor, but this semester is great. So I think it's just finding that right fit and finding someone that you really connect with. Because our classes are kind of small, I think that it allows for that and we also have a lot of doctoral students in our program that can act as mentors in our program because they all had clinical experience as well.

Cooper, a student in the Chemistry PhD program, had an overall positive response

regarding the mentoring in his program, but did address some challenges. Specifically, because

of the pressures faculty face to acquire grant funding, the mentoring and perhaps even the

teaching aspect of the graduate program may be lacking. While it is a valid concern for the

growth and success of most graduate programs, the focus on funding affects the culture of the

program. When asked whether his program's faculty are good mentors, Cooper stated:

> The student faculty relationship is always a bit challenging because it is a demanding relationship. I think I personally have had a pretty decent experience. I haven't had any major issues with my research advisors. I have had two completely different experiences with research advisors which both helped me in different ways, so in general, my research advisors have cared about my education and wanted to help me succeed. Whether their idea of me succeeding was a little different than mine and whether they pushed me in a direction I didn't think was necessary, that's a different story. But, in general. Particularly in the physical sciences, getting grant money is the way you sustain your lab. We have to buy tons of materials, large instruments, supplies, so we have to have large grant money. In order to get large grant money, you have to have a lot of publications. In order to get publications, you have to have good students. In order to have good students, research advisors push their students really hard. It is a cyclical thing.

In many disciplines, faculty members are under pressure to publish research and receive grant funding to help sustain their research at the university. This, in turn, helps the faculty support their graduate students through research assistantships. The students often rely on their faculty supervisors for guidance and trust that they have their best interests in mind. While this is ideally always the case, the reality is that students do need to look out for themselves, as well, and make sure that they are getting the appropriate credit for their work. During a recent antidotal conversation with a newly admitted graduate student, I learned that his decision to transition from undergraduate to graduate education at the University of Central Florida was based on his current relationship he has established with his faculty mentor. This student stated that he was fortunate because his advisor has put him as first author on more than one publication; something that this student acknowledged is rare. Even though he received financial offers to attend other institutions, the decision to stay with his current advisor was easy because of the mutually beneficial relationship that had already been established.

Culture

A focus of this study is on how the culture of the individual, as well as the culture of the academic program and institution relates to the challenges graduate students face and the students' perceptions of academic dishonesty. I wanted to know to what extent the norms and expectations of an academic discipline impact graduate student's understanding of appropriate academic sharing and to what extent the ethical or unethical academic practices of the instructor impact the actions of the graduate students. These questions were explored in more depth in the interviews than in the online survey, but the survey results did produce some interesting results

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related to the perceptions students have of their own advantages or disadvantages (particularly related to language when applicable) and their beliefs regarding whether it is acceptable to include the research and ideas of authoritative sources in course assignments, without including citations. While nearly all respondents did not find it acceptable to include the work of someone else without citing the source, students in certain colleges responded more strongly than others. For example, 79% (n= 197) of College of Health and Public Affairs students strongly disagreed that this action is acceptable, while only 61% of respondents in the College of Engineering and Computer Science strongly disagreed. In the College of Arts and Humanities, 74% (n=73) respondents strongly disagreed that it is acceptable to include research and ideas of authoritative sources in course assignments, without citations, while similarly, 82% (n=49) of College of Nursing and 80% (n=16) of Rosen College of Hospitality Management, and 75% (n=227) of College of Education respondents also strongly disagreed.

Each person interviewed during this study was asked the same set of questions, with additional questions arising as the conversation progressed. Similar themes continually emerged throughout the discussions. A brief discussion of the major themes and the input that was gathered from respondents is below.

Defining Academic Dishonesty

Survey and interview data indicate differences in the perceived norms and expectations of academic disciplines and how academic dishonesty plays a part. A common interview response was that cheating happens regularly at the undergraduate level, but that it is not as evident at the graduate level, perhaps because of the possible consequences of getting caught and the impact on a person's career, particularly in relation to doctoral students. However, in regards to research, there are plausible different interpretations of data, causing questions to arise about how those interpretations are applied to students' research.

When asked how he would define academic dishonesty, Max, a Computer Science PhD student, stated,

> I think that being an honest person is something you have or you don't. If you send someone who is dishonest to an ethics class, they are still going to be a dishonest person. I don't think it is something you can change. Maybe they can choose to hide it. From my perspective, it would be two things. Earlier I would have said plagiarism, but with software now we can catch that sort of thing. When I do research papers in Excel, maybe my software right now is like 82% precision. But it would be nice to bump that up to 90% or 92%. Some kind of random distribution to add 10%. Claiming I did something that it doesn't do would be dishonest. Basically what I do is I solve a problem, I say this is theoretically the contribution and to show it I will create a prototype. So basically there's three types of research, coming up with the new problem that's never been done, taking an existing problem and putting in a different environment or taking an existing

problem and optimizing it. Dishonesty would be me saying that I did something that it doesn't actually do. You write the publication and don't publish source code.

When he was asked to define academic dishonesty, David Frost, a doctoral student in the Texts and Technology program, responded by stating,

> I would say that academic dishonesty is the act or process of trying to claim credit for work thinking or effort that isn't yours. And so, I think that definition would allow for intertextuality and citation and influences from others and the appropriate nodding of head to the person that contributed ideas and such. But, dishonesty and by phrasing it as dishonesty and not the integrity thing, the dishonesty would have to be intentional. I think there could be an absence of integrity if someone violates one of these ethical rules unintentionally but I don't think you could be academically dishonest without knowing what you are doing. If someone does accidentally forget a citation, is that even a violation of academic integrity? My understanding of it would say no it's not, that is simply a mistake. It is along the lines of a typo and yes it's regrettable and bad and it looks awful.

Each person interviewed shared their ideas on what academic dishonesty is and how they define it. While some individuals noted the more traditional forms of cheating, such as plagiarism or using someone else's work without citing appropriately, some interviewees brought up the issue that what constitutes academic dishonesty has not really been discussed by faculty or mentors in their graduate program. See *Table 8: Defining Academic Dishonesty* for additional responses related to defining academic dishonesty.

Table 8: Defining Academic Dishonesty

Respondent	How would you define academic dishonesty?
Olivia Tisdell, Applied Learning & Instruction	Using information without citing is dishonesty. I don't think it's looked at as dishonesty. Here, they encourage that kind of behavior [collaboration] and helping each other. It's looked at as collaborative learning. I knew someone who was in a master's program who did all online classes and she had told me that some of the people in her classes were plagiarizing their entire final papers. Maybe that goes on in my program. I don't know. Maybe I don't pay enough attention. Maybe it's easier when you don't have to face the professor and just submit your paper online. I guess it's a different perspective.
Zoe Nooyi, Business PhD, Marketing track	When I think academic dishonesty, I think of fudging data. Stealing ideas. Not quoting the right people. If I really think about it, I think it really also goes a little bit beyond that. I think often times, what I understand is that sometimes those are the obvious things, but we might write something that actually was sparked by something that you read and you didn't quote it, and it wasn't purposefully. When I first think about it I think about something with a purpose, but I think that it can happen even with well-meaning intentions. And then you don't give credit where credit's due. It can be unintentional.
Sarah Iacocca, Industrial Engineering PhD	Well, there are several different aspects to it and I think one aspect is characterizing work that's not your own as your own. And then I would also say doing things that are unethical would also fall under academic dishonesty. Maybe in terms of IRB and related human subjects type things. I also think carelessness with your data is academic dishonesty. Carelessness with collecting it; privacy, the collection of data and the storage of your data and the manipulation of your data. I think intentionally disregarding particular pieces of data that aren't useful to you or don't align with your goals.

International Student Experiences

No international students participated in the interview portion of the study. However, some interview participants commented on the dynamics of their graduate program(s), which sometimes includes differences among the domestic and international students, as well as interactions they had directly with the students. Julia Dewey, a master's student in the Applied Learning and Instruction MA program told me of a time when she had with an international

student in one of her classes ask for some assistance with English grammar for something she had to send to a professor. According to Julia, "it was just so heavy and I said, listen, you know, I understand that in your culture the professor is way up here and you are way down here. It's not like that as much here. They are much more knowledgeable and we need to respect them for that but there is still that we are both adults. That was a bit difficult; a bit challenging for her."

Julia's example represents a likely scenario for many students coming from cultures that emphasize very formal communications with people in positions of authority. Sarah Iacocca, an Industrial Engineering PhD student and member of the military also raised a point about the different attitudes of young people who have grown up in America versus other parts of the world. She shared the following in regards to her experiences with international students in her graduate program,

> I don't want to make this broad sweeping generalization but the millennial generation tends to be a very self-centered, consumer oriented generation and I don't necessarily think that the foreign students fall into the millennial category. So, I mean, when we think of what millennial generations are like, that's really an Americanized or Western idea. I don't think I have met any foreign student that was from Europe. They are all from Asia, the Middle East, some from South America. But they are not Western civilization type countries and so, they have their own set of cultural ethics and as with any PhD program, I think there's a reverse incentive for the advisor to over work their PhD students to have their PhD students do things that are tangential or unrelated to that personal student's dissertation. And there's also incentive to keep them there as long as possible because they are very cheap labor. And so, I think the millennial is less likely to accept some of those terms. And of course for a foreign student that's not anxious to get back, as long as they are being paid enough to survive, and their advisor can motivate them through having publications even though you haven't graduated yet. You know, you are getting publications. They can motivate them through "I am giving you publication opportunities". You know, there's perhaps a relationship there that will extend and cause them to work more than perhaps they should and extend their longevity in terms of how long it takes them to get the degree done.
>
> I do know foreign students who have said to me, "It's very hard for me to say no to my advisor because they are paying my salary". I don't have that problem; I am not getting

any money from the university. So, I have no problem saying no. My employer encourages me to say no because my employer wants me to finish this degree as fast as possible so I can get back to serving.

Where Do We Draw the Line?

Where to draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable behavior in regards to ethics in academia was a common theme throughout the interviews. What is or is not acceptable varies by discipline. For example, Hannah spoke from the perspective of a student in the Creative Writing MFA program. "In terms of being in academics and being in this creative field, I mean, obviously we wouldn't plagiarize each other, that's not academic integrity, but you have these really fine lines of collusion," she stated. She continued to note that ". . . sometimes in workshop, the point is to collude. You produce a work and then your classmates talk about it." In terms of giving credit for ideas, she added that "You don't give them credit, but it's just you are all contributing to the craft, so it's really kind of hard to keep a creed of art and the sciences giving them the same definition of integrity and feedback because they function differently." Hannah Steele has experience in the physical sciences as well as in the field of creative writing. When comparing her field to those with a more scientific focus Hannah stated,

> In a scientific article, yes of course you are going to cite the research of someone before you, absolutely because you need to document it; you need to make sure that you can reproduce. It totally makes sense. But in terms of creative writing, creative aspects, you know, any of the fine arts, stuff like that, even probably dance, you learn from each other. The humanities; you have to…it's in the name. It has to do with the different dialogues and the way different discourses communicate and the way they are understood because in literature and art, when you are reading it, and you see an allusion to let's say Moby Dick…someone says "Call me Ishmael". Everyone knows where that's from. You don't have to cite it; we know.

David, a student in the Texts and Technology PhD program, discussed where the line between academic honesty and dishonesty is drawn in relation to his own experience teaching. Through his use of the creation of a course syllabus as an example, it seems that perhaps his focus is more on the surface features of academic dishonesty rather than the underlying principles of academic integrity.

> That also reminds me of how a lot of us make our syllabi. We ask everyone else for their syllabus from when they taught the course before we did and the answer is always "Of course". The question I have is, when we are presenting our syllabus to our students, how can we do that with a clear conscience or, how can we do what we did to create the document that we are reading when we are talking about the plagiarism concepts in our class. We have the plagiarism clause. How can we discuss that on the document if the plagiarism section itself was plagiarized? If we acknowledge openly in class that it was plagiarized, won't that strike up a valuable conversation? I approve of a plagiarized syllabus as long as it is disclosed and we discuss why it is okay.

> It is professionally acceptable and in this community, it is expected that syllabi sections will be plagiarized. And we openly willingly and freely trade syllabi with one another. When we hand them to one another we say take what you want. You would be a jerk if you don't say that. So, it's a really interesting way that we work and yet we never question it and our students would probably be floored to know that we do that. And if they discovered that someday and then we accuse them of plagiarizing one of their papers, how would our argument hold any weight at all? We need to come clean with them is basically what it is.

> We need to clarify what needs to be original and what doesn't. What needs to come from where.

From the perspective of someone in the physical sciences, Cooper Curie relates his experiences primarily to the presentation of data. During the interview he stated, "There is some level of data manipulation for lack of a better word that has to happen in order to interpret it, but where is the fine line of going too far and data interpretation? Anybody can look at a set of data

and see something a little bit differently . . . you have to be careful and there are a lot of instances that the lines are blurred for sure."

Program Expectations

The perceived ability of the interview participants to be successful in their graduate program varied depending on their opinions about the general expectations of their graduate program. For example, Max Jobs, a Computer Science PhD student, discussed how his advisor has higher standards than others, while acknowledging that all departments are probably different. According to Max, his advisor's standards were high because "higher standards get people better jobs". And according to Max, his advisor was correct. At the time of the interview, Max had twelve publications and a thirteenth submitted. While he acknowledges that his program is challenging, Max's experience has been positive and one that has helped propel his professional career. Other students shared similar experiences. For example, Cooper stated that the coursework he was required to take in the Chemistry PhD program was "good", but that the research is the primary focus of the physical sciences and what is heavily emphasized and the most challenging. Like Max, Cooper acknowledged that each research advisor is different and has different expectations. Both students also stated that it is their understanding that research advisors decide how many publications are required from their advisees. According to Cooper, his advisor wants his students to have at least three first author publications prior to graduation. This is a theme discussed by a few of the respondents in the research intensive programs. Similarly to what Max mentioned, Cooper brought up the competitiveness of the job market and

how publications in reputable journals help make graduates more competitive. "I think it's to the student's advantage in this field to have more publications so I don't think it is unreasonable but it does lay itself out as sometimes often stressful and causes a lot of anxiety. There's a lot of pressure, for sure", he stated.

While research and publications arose as a key challenge for students interviewed who were seeking degrees in the hard sciences, in relation to her own experiences in the Business PhD program, Zoe emphasized that while the research is demanding, the coursework is also very challenging in the program due to the fact that her background in statistics was not as strong as she would have liked going into the program. Karen, a student in the Social Work MSW program, felt particularly challenged due to the fact that she felt the majority of instruction she was receiving in the program came from adjunct instructors rather than full-time faculty. While the adjunct faculty may be skilled and highly qualified, if they come to campus only to teach and have no real involvement in the culture of the program, a disconnect will surely exist in the program between the adjunct faculty and students. Karen stated,

> We seem to have a lot of adjunct professors and I don't find the adjunct professors as well versed in the topics…I go back to that different teachers have different requirements so if you hire a lot of adjuncts, whose experience is not teaching, it's not the best education.

The specific challenges that each interview respondent faced varied, but among the responses, students included the variations in faculty expectations, the student's own expectations of themselves and their goals, and their willingness to seek help from others. See

Table 9: Program Expectations for a summary of four respondents' answer to whether they found the graduate program academically challenging.

Table 9: Program Expectations

Respondent	Discussion
Grace, Applied Sociology MA	They are proud of it (their program) and they are proud of their students, so there is an expectation level that goes along with that. The way to overcome it initially, it took talking to some of the doctoral students and figuring out what they did to get through this. I just got told to read this book in two days, so what do you do? And they were very helpful in explaining well, you don't read the entire book; you read the major parts of it and you have an idea of how to hold a conversation about it, but nobody is expecting you to read every page on every word; that's impossible. A lot of it was just talking to other people who have been there for a while and getting tips and strategies for how to deal with the coursework and that was basically it. Even being open and honest with the professors and seeing what they were looking for.
Sarah, Industrial Engineering PhD	Unlike undergraduate education, I think graduate education is a lot more independent and because of that, you can make it as challenging or not as challenging as you want. As a native English speaker and because of grade inflation, and the expectation that everybody is going to get high grades in graduate school, it's not challenging to do well. But, there are plenty of opportunities if you are self-motivated, to learn a lot. So, the opportunities are definitely there.
Hannah, Creative Writing MFA	Grad school is easier than I expected it to be. It is demanding in that we have to read a lot all the time, which I do but I feel like a lot of the time that the academic part…you have to do responses and all…which is academically rigorous and all, I don't have a problem with it, but then, my teachers are also expecting me to be writing on the side and submitting work and I just feel like I am so swamped in academia.

Respondent	Discussion
Kayla, Communications MA	Yes, very much so. There's kind of two different schools of thought with it; qualitative and quantitative. So, I call it scarves and calculators. I'm the math person or I'm the touchy feely person. I love it. In my research, I am rather qualitative. It's nice and laid back but you get a lot of information. Coming from undergraduate where you don't get a lot of detail; we are now reading philosophy articles.

The responses from the interview participants indicate that in many cases, the students' involvement in their own education and the effort needed to be successful may heavily depend on what the students want to take away from the experience. The level of intensity and effort exerted depends on the person's goals for academic achievement.

Pressure to Publish

Not every one of the interview respondents was pursuing a degree in a discipline that requires students to publish scholarly work in order to graduate from the program. However, for many of the individuals I spoke with, publishing original work in reputable journals was a necessary part of their graduate school journey. Hannah, for example, is in a field (Creative Writing MFA) that revolves around writing and publishing. According to her, "We are all under pressure to publish. You need to be submitting your work all the time." While the number of publications was not as critical for her, Charlotte, a student in the Conservation Biology PhD program, also emphasized that publishing is a key part of the program. According to Charlotte, "There's not a set expectation to publish a particular number of articles. The requirement in this department is one paper submitted. The expectation is usually one paper published." Other

programs or specific faculty advisors might have more stringent publication requirements. As previously noted, Max, a student in the Computer Science PhD program, had twelve journal publications with a thirteenth submitted at the time of the interview.

Faculty Mentoring

Overall, most of the students interviewed had positive things to say about the faculty mentoring that they have received. Kayla Greene, a student in the Communications MA, Interpersonal Communication track emphasized that the faculty she has approached for one-on-one talks had gone "above and beyond" but that as the student, you do have to approach them. "At this stage in the game, we should be proactive about that," she stated. About her experiences with mentorship in the Conservation Biology PhD program, Charlotte Wilcox stated that her advisor is "a good research manager and a good professional mentor, so I know he will help me with everything having to do with my career."

While his own experience has been very positive in the Computer Science PhD program, Max Jobs did make note of the fact that he is aware of students who have not had a good experience with faculty mentorship. He stated, "I mean you hear horror stories about advisors. You talk to other students that have had bad experiences. I mean, I have a great relationship with my advisor but I have heard stories and worked with students that transferred to my advisor because their advisor who supported them pretty much owned the student and expected them to spend the night in the lab and stuff like that." He continued to say, "My advisor cares deeply about students. Some advisors are here for different reasons. I was lucky to have a good experience but there are definitely people that don't have a good of an experience as me. There

are definitely bad advisors." With the exception of the experiences of other students in his graduate program that Max mentioned, most of the respondents interviewed had positive things to say about their faculty mentors and their interactions with them during their time in the graduate program. A summary of a few of those responses is in *Table 10: Mentoring*.

Table 10: Mentoring

Respondent	Discussion
Grace, Applied Sociology MA	I go often for help. Yep. They are very friendly; they are not at all stand offish. So, yeah, every single one of them, even the one that for the longest time, I was trying to get away from him in the hallways because I was afraid he might know who I was and want to flick me off the balcony or something. Even he is awesome. They are all good.
Zoe, Business Administration PhD	I cannot say enough about my mentor that I have and I think that she is a fabulous and fantastic mentor. I can't speak about whether the other faculty. I think that she is outstanding in comparison to the rest. I count my blessings every day.
Maria Mead, Anthropology MA	I feel that my advisor for the type of student that I am, I feel that she is a good mentor. Do I wish that we had a little bit more interaction? Probably, yes. I think it also might be the type of student that I am. I work full-time, so I don't really have the time to go and sit and develop this relationship like I see other students doing. But I wish that there were a more standard protocol or program that we had to follow to make sure that advisors are following up with students. In a utopia. It's good for what it is.
Hannah Steele, Creative Writing MFA	When I first came to the program, I won't lie, I followed money. I wasn't really familiar with a lot of the faculty; my teachers had said they had great faculty at UCF and I believed them. I just am so glad that I decided to come here. I have had so many opportunities and met so many talented people. I am like, is this my life and I am actually here? All these amazing writers; I would not have had these amazing opportunities had I gone anywhere else. I am very happy and am hoping that maybe they will want to keep me after I graduate.

During the interview portion of this study, each respondent was asked the question, "Have you seen any evidence that information technology has changed how students work?" The responses varied, presumably due to the student's own familiarity with technology, their exposure to it, and the role the technology plays within the academic discipline. For example, in the Computer Science doctoral program, the use of information technology is common place. As Max Jobs stated, sometimes students can use the technology to their advantage to find answers to problems; including those that are meant to be solved independently. For example, he discussed the fact that professors sometimes have core problems but describe things differently, leaving out key words, in an effort to reduce the number of instances where students simply use search engines, such as Google, to find the solution to the problem online.

From his perspective as a student in the Texts and Technology doctoral program, David emphasized that one of the greatest benefits of the connectedness of computer networks at this point, as he put it, is "the easy access to information". He used the following example to demonstrate the overwhelming availability of information that is on the Web:

> The expectation in society is instant and immediate access to any information we could possibly want. On my way here from my car, as I was walking down the stairs, I asked Google what you looked like so I knew who I was looking for in the lobby and sure enough, you came up first in the image search. So it worked great. So, you know, I walked in acting though I knew exactly who you were.

Most respondents mentioned liking that they now have the ability to access scholarly journals and other academic information online. The Business PhD student, Zoe Nooyi, for example, mentioned that she has not had to visit the library as a graduate student since she can

find the sources she needs online. Zoe also appreciates the numerous reference software applications that are now available. "It used to be like writing a reference table was a task that took its own chunk of time but now, you just use a reference software," she stated. Similarly, Grace Meier, a student in the Applied Sociology MA program, mentioned the ease of finding the information, but also, referenced that technology such as Turnitin.com can also be used by faculty to catch if students are plagiarizing. Maria Mead, a master's student the Anthropology MA program, also pointed out that while beneficial for the students, there are online sites for faculty to help identify when people are submitting work that is not their own. An interesting point made by Karen Abbott, a student in the Social Work MSW program, is that perhaps students do not have as deep of an appreciation for the work associated with doing the research that they did before the internet and a time where many individuals own or have access to a computer. When she was completing her undergraduate degree she had a typewriter and a white out cartridge. She also accessed information through microfiche and searched for journals using the library index system. As a commuter student, she does like having access to the online resources but sees that issues could arise with students searching for papers for sale online. "As long as you are doing the work that you are supposed to, I don't have a problem with technology," she stated.

The Culture of the Graduate Program

All interview respondents were asked if they think that the culture of their academic program promotes ethical decision making. No respondents stated that the culture of the program is such that unethical behavior is specifically encouraged; instead, a common theme was

that the students did not receive a great deal of guidance on the matter and that it was something

that they, as students, believed was expected of them to know coming into the program.

According to Olivia Tisdell, a student in the Applied Learning and Instruction MA program,

"There is a pretty good honor code going on and people are pretty trustworthy". When asked

about the expectations for students in the program, Olivia stated that they were not uniform. In

response to receiving the "B" grade in a seminar course, she said, "I got really mad because the

professor ruined my 4.0. I thought to myself, if I had someone with those expectations all along,

I wouldn't have ended up with a B." Interestingly, Olivia did not see herself as being at fault for

submitting work that may not have been worthy of an "A", but rather, believed that she would

have done better if the other professors in the program would have had higher expectations for

the quality of work in her previous classes. Although Olivia did not engage in any deviant

academic behavior, anomie theory can be used to address her perceptions of the situation and her

motivations. It was not until she received the "B" grade that the effort that she put forward was

amplified and she became even more determined to do well.

One of the most interesting responses to the question about the culture of the graduate

program and whether academic integrity was promoted came from Sarah Iacocca, a student in

the Industrial Engineering PhD program. In response to being asked if the culture of her

program promotes ethical decision making she stated, "No, I don't," She continued to say:

> I am not saying that they promote unethical decision making. I'm not saying that, but I
> think there is an assumption that…and I even got this at the other places I have been
> before UCF, so it's not just UCF and it's not just Industrial Engineering, that there is sort
> of a presumption that you are going to be ethical and I don't need to tell you about the
> golden rule and I don't need to tell you about plagiarism and I don't need to tell you
> about academic integrity issues because this is something you should already know. And

so I think there's a lot of things that are taken for granted and because of that, there isn't a high emphasis placed on that. Now I have heard that in newer catalogues that there is some kind of course they have to take.

We don't have separate classes for PhD students and master's students. They are graduate courses, they are all mixed together. Most of the people in there are master's students, so they are not going to go through that if that's only for people in the PhD program then that doesn't affect them. You know and a lot of them, the way our program works, the master's degree course work looks very similar to the PhD coursework so you can sort of get the master's degree and then decide you want to add the dissertation afterwards. So, you know, a lot of them may be still on the fence about what they are going to do.

Max Jobs, a student in the Computer Science PhD program had a slightly different take on ethical decision making in his program. In response to whether the culture of the Computer Science doctoral program promotes ethical decision making, Max stated,

You know that's an interesting question because of my perspective. Before the NSF proposal, it never occurred to me to go through the Institutional Review Board (IRB). There are certain areas of the sciences that are required to take the CITI training, but in computer science, they don't require it. So there are certain types of things that a lot of the Computer Science professors aren't even aware of. In general, you work with your advisor and it's up to your advisor. I have never heard of any advisor that's bad or stories through the grapevine. I know that my advisor has way high standards.

David Frost, a doctoral student in the Texts and Technology PhD program, emphasized that his program does promote ethical decision making. "I think that it definitely does because we do seem to emphasize the idea of idea sharing or the concept of idea sharing, he stated". He continued to say, "I think there's no way to do what we do in our seminars dishonestly. I mean you can go purchase a paper on the topic but it would feel wrong because the conversation so directly led to your thinking that you need to attribute it." Similarly, Charlotte Wilcox, a student in the Conservation Biology PhD program also felt that the culture of her program promoted

academic integrity. According to Charlotte, her program encourages good relationships between faculty and students. She stated, "It's not the case that faculty are competing with each other. We don't even work in competing fields, so we aren't even competing for the same money. Also, there's really good respect between the faculty and students so there's a lot of very good communication." She continued by saying, "You can talk to any of the faculty and they're willing to talk to you so if there are any issues, you know that you can go and who you can go to."

A difference in viewpoint related to the culture of the program seemed to stem from whether academic integrity was specifically addressed in the course curriculum. According to Grace Meier, a student in the Applied Sociology MA program, a discussion of ethics is built into the program curriculum. "We take courses on all of that. We have to, it's within the program. It's part of the curriculum for the pro-seminar." Grace continues by saying, "you are basically given a semester long orientation to graduate school. It's really helpful because they instruct in strategies for being successful in the program." Similarly, Hannah Steele, a student in the Creative Writing MFA program stated that they talk about ethical decision making "a lot" in her graduate program. "It is a big part of our dialogue," she stated. One example of a discussion topic within her discipline relates to the line between fiction and non-fiction writing and how being labeled as someone who has misrepresented information to the public can be quite damaging to one's career. As Kitsuse (1962) noted, a sociological theory of deviance, such as labeling theory, should focus on the interactions that define a behavior and "organize and activate the application of sanctions by individuals, groups, or agencies" (p.256). In Hanna's case, she was "very conscious" about what is going on in her field of study and understands the

impact of being "marked as a plagiarizer in creative writing". If this takes place, she noted,

"Your career is over. You can't publish anymore, you can't be an editor, you can't even teach

because you are a plagiarizer . . .it's the black spot. You're gone forever." In this case, Hannah's

awareness of the outcomes of being labeled in a negative manner have influenced her own

decision making.

> According to Hannah,
>
> There's a big divide in the field right now about what non-fiction is and what fiction is and sometimes they can't tell the difference because somebody will write a memoir but memory isn't perfect, so what do you do with the parts you can't quite remember? Do you say maybe this happened or do you say something that sounds right but you are not 100% sure or just go off of hyperbolic crazy, clearly this is fake, but some people are very literal readers. And you have the whole James Frey, *A Million Little Pieces*; everyone freaked out. There's still the backlash from that. . .it's really a gray area. What happened was is a publisher got ahold of the manuscript and liked it and was trying to figure out how to market the book and basically, they asked the author, did this happen? Parts of it. How much of it? Most of it.

Academic and Personal Challenges

Each interview respondent was asked, "Do you find your graduate program academically

challenging?" In response to this question, David Frost (Text and Technology PhD) said frankly,

"Very." He explained that students in the program are given a very large reading load of rich

and challenging texts that then lead to rewarding conversations about the readings. "There's an

awful lot of thinking that we do in these classes and we get an awful lot out of them." Having a

lot to complete, and in many cases, read, in a short time was a common theme. When asked how

they deal with this challenge, respondents gave answers, such as "I have learned to read much

more quickly than I used to" and "you read the major parts of it and you have an idea of how to hold a conversation about it, but nobody is expecting you to read every page or every word."

Balancing academics with personal lives also came up during the discussions. Julia Dewey, a master's student in the Applied Learning and Instruction program, for example, had been out of school for twenty years before returning to complete her master's degree. According to Julia, "I can't read every single book and I can't put the time that I want to in every single thing. It's the balancing act. I have three teenagers. It was homework time while they're in school. It took over my life for three years." Similarly, Zoe Nooyi, a student in the Business Administration PhD program noted that her biggest challenges are personal because of her choice to return to graduate school while maintaining a home life with her family. For Zoe, the funding she receives to attend the doctoral program makes it possible for her to pursue the degree. "For me, it's funding that makes it possible," she stated. "I would not be able to get a PhD on a $5,000 stipend. I pay more than that for my daughter to go to school, so for me, the fact that this school did have some funding available made it a possibility. Otherwise, I couldn't quit my job," she continued.

Hannah Steele, a student in the Creative Writing MFA similarly noted that she faced challenges juggling her writing, teaching, publishing, and academic responsibilities. Hannah stated,

> I often felt I had to pick and choose, which it's good for project management but I am like crazy organized. I have like calendars in my house with all of my stuff plus a calendar on my phone to remind me of things and it was still, I was really overwhelmed for a while and I couldn't figure what was happening because I was paying attention to my project management. I even dealt out time for "me time". This is my time and I am going to go to the gym or crochet something or do nothing and even then I was really stressed out. It might be me, I don't know what happened.

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Sometimes the challenges faced by students relate more to what is taking place within the administrative side of the department. For example, when there are budgetary issues at the institution, it not only impacts the university's faculty and staff, but the students, as well. For example, Hannah commented on some of the programmatic changes that caused her some concern.

> There is some animosity there, especially because of budgets because I heard that the English Department's budget was cut 49% and they didn't know who was going to have teaching positions. I got lucky because I was in Writing and Rhetoric and I was already slotted for a position which was good. Composition wasn't my first choice but I know it will really help me when I go to get a job later. So there's that kind of pins and needles kind of thing and some people are buddy-buddy and some people are bitter.

Feeling as though she was a part of the cohort and making sure that the new students coming in felt welcome was also a concern for Hannah. She mentioned that when she first entered the program that the students who were already in the program "kind of made their own little clique and were hesitant to let some of us in." According to Hannah, some of the students were "really open" but others were "kind of snotty". Hannah acknowledged that she is "very happy in the program" but that issues of classes not being offered or cancelled and the fact that as a new student, she did not feel as welcomed as she would have liked from the current students in the program, did pose challenges for her to overcome.

<u>Answering the Research Questions</u>

From the data gathered in the online survey and the interviews, I made inferences to the more general graduate student population. Results of the analysis help show distinctions among students in graduate programs in the arts or social sciences and those in the hard sciences,

particularly in regards to research and program expectations. I hope that these findings will help

university administrators and faculty see that the atmosphere and culture of the program impacts

students' academic experiences and that the culture of the program does affect the way students

interpret what is acceptable academic behavior within their program. In terms of the overall

graduate student populations' interest in ethics training, 84% (n=1,022) of students responded

that universities should require ethics training for all graduate students who are involved in

research. These data show that students see the value in ethics training and see it as an important

part of graduate education. For a breakdown of results for the entire sample, see *Table 11: All

Colleges – Challenges* and *Table 12: All Colleges – Academic Honesty*.

Table 11: All Colleges - Challenges

	No. of Responses	% Sample	No. of Responses	% Sample	No. of Responses	% Sample	No. of Responses	% Sample
	Very frequently or Frequently		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
I generally find the workload in my graduate courses manageable.	777	**62%**	398	32%	69	6%	4	0%
I feel overwhelmed by the research requirements of my graduate program.	226	18%	586	**47%**	336	27%	100	8%
I struggle financially to pay for graduate school.	467	**38%**	324	26%	194	16%	260	21%
I find it difficult to balance graduate school and my personal relationships.	484	**39%**	474	38%	217	17%	72	6%
I am satisfied with the level of mentoring that I receive from my academic adviser.	501	**40%**	337	27%	263	21%	142	11%

Table 12: All Colleges – Academic Honesty

	No. of Responses	% Sample	No. of Responses	% Sample	No. of Responses	% Sample	No. of Responses	% Sample
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
It is acceptable to include the research and ideas of authoritative sources in course assignments, without including citations.	12	1%	35	3%	284	23%	906	**73%**
Most students use unauthorized course materials on assignments in online courses, even if the resources are not permitted by the instructor.	37	3%	197	17%	661	**55%**	296	25%
In graduate school, it is acceptable to collaborate on assignments, even if the work is supposed to be completed independently.	17	1%	170	14%	516	**42%**	512	**42%**
Graduate students who are caught cheating should have the offense listed on their university transcript.	220	18%	553	**46%**	357	30%	77	6%
Universities should require ethics training for all graduate students who are involved in research.	380	31%	642	**53%**	153	13%	37	3%
If I knew that someone cheated on an assignment, I would inform the instructor.	98	8%	398	33%	639	**53%**	74	6%

The online survey portion of this research study provided data related to the challenges that graduate students face, as well as students' attitudes towards academic dishonesty and their personal experiences in regards to plagiarism and the appropriate use of citations. Additional results indicate how students view their program as a part of the university as a whole and whether, based on their opinions, the faculty members in the program encourage academic integrity and set good examples in their own research. During the interviews, each participant was asked about their person definition of academic honesty. Interestingly, most respondents explained what they considered to be dishonest behavior rather than specifically addressing what is appropriate or ethical. Furthermore, the results indicated that most respondents shared a common view that writing about someone else's data or research without providing citations, misrepresenting data, and disregarding particular pieces of data to skew results would all be considered unethical academic behavior. The interview responses also produced a few notable themes. For example, each respondent was asked about the culture of their academic program and whether it promotes ethical decision making. The responses varied student to student, but the key finding was that it is not that the programs promote unethical behavior, but that they do not explicitly talk about the importance of ethics in academia. The data collected from the interviews are summarized and reported along with the results of the online survey.

Research Question #1

How does culture (of the individual and the environment of the academic program and institution) relate to the challenges graduate students face and the students' perceptions of academic dishonesty?

The online survey results of this study indicate that differences regarding culture relate to what takes place within the environment of the graduate program, not necessarily the culture or ethnic background of the student. The strains associated with achievement at the graduate level can be difficult enough, but even more so when coupled with a feeling that the faculty in the program are not setting what students consider to be positive examples in their own research. For example, when asked if their professors encourage academic integrity and set good examples in their own research, the majority agreed, but 7% (n=82) of people disagreed or strongly disagreed. Of the students who indicated that their professors do not encourage academic integrity and set good examples in their own research, 10% (n=17) of all College of Engineering and Computer Science respondents and 6% (n=17) of College of Education respondents represented the highest number of students to provide a response of disagree or strongly disagree to the question. This does not necessarily indicate that these students found that the faculty set bad examples specifically, but it does indicate that at minimum, they felt that little to no emphasis was placed on the importance of academic integrity, based on the students' responses.

In the survey results, similarities among international and domestic graduate students surfaced. Both groups included students who felt they did not enter graduate school prepared for the challenges. The major differences related to the culture of the graduate program rather than the individual. For example, of the 95 respondents to the online survey who identified as temporary residents (international students), 19% (n=18) did not think that they entered graduate school prepared for the challenges they have faced. Looking at these data through the lens of anomie or strain theory, this would indicate that there is a possibility that the individuals may struggle to achieve their academic goals. Similarly, respondents to the online survey who

identified a U.S. citizenship status other than temporary resident (n=1,108), 19% (n=215) also did not think that they entered graduate school prepared for the challenges they have faced.

One main individualistic difference between domestic and international students that arose from the surveys relates to language. In fact, of the 95 respondents who identified as temporary residents (international students), 45% (n=43) agreed that they are at a disadvantage compared to other students because English is not their primary language. In contrast, less than 4% (n=39) of domestic students agreed that they are at a disadvantage compared to other students because English is not their primary language. Of those respondents, 54 % (n=21) identified Hispanic or Latino as their ethnicity, with only 29% (n=6) of those being native U.S. citizens and the others identifying as either naturalized or permanent resident aliens. Aside from the language difference, the survey results did not produce notable variations among the data when comparing international and domestic graduate students' responses.

The interviews brought up some noteworthy points about the interactions between domestic and international students and the challenges that are faced by both sets of students. For example, Sarah Iacocca, an Industrial Engineering PhD student, shared that she is one of the few U.S. born students in her doctoral classes. This has provided her with different experiences from what she had as an undergraduate at a different institution and has brought about its own set of challenges, particularly in regards to language barriers when working with students on group projects. Sarah shared the following in regards to the challenges of her graduate program and her views on academic dishonesty. While the information provided is second hand in regards to the international students' experiences, I do think that the points are worth sharing:

Unlike undergraduate education, I think graduate education is a lot more independent and because of that, you can make it as challenging or not as challenging as you want. As a native English speaker and because of grade inflation, and the expectation that everybody is going to get high grades in graduate school, it's not challenging to do well. But, there are plenty of opportunities if you are self-motivated to learn a lot. So, the opportunities are definitely there.

You can be academically dishonest regardless of intent. If you plagiarize, you plagiarize, even if you don't realize the rules. Some of it may be confusion about what really constitutes plagiarism and there are lots of cases where students, especially foreign speaking students repeat more words in the text than they should. Partially because they're afraid that if they try to put it in their own words, they will have lost the meaning. So, I mean, I think there is a hesitation to rewrite text and I think there is a sense of okay, I can copy/paste whole paragraphs or whole pages as long as I put a citation at the end. And so that's a rules issue. I think there's also perhaps a lack of clarification within our department or at least a clarification on what counts as academic dishonesty, especially when it comes to sharing information. I mean, you are expected to work with each other, but where is the line drawn? And I feel like there hasn't been a line in a lot of cases drawn.

Research Question #1.a

To what extent do the norms and expectations of an academic discipline impact graduate students' understanding of appropriate academic sharing?

During the interviews, a pattern of responses began to emerge regarding where to draw the line between academic honesty and inappropriate academic practices in research. Students that I interviewed in disciplines such as Computer Science and Chemistry noted that data misinterpretation and/or manipulation is a factor to consider in regards to appropriate academic sharing. For example, Cooper Curie, a Chemistry PhD student, stated,

I think it expresses itself a lot as manipulation of data, so taking some raw data that doesn't necessarily match up with some of the ideas that you think should have happened or some of the things that would make sense to happen and then just sort of massaging it to prove your point.

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When asked in the interview if the culture of his graduate program promotes ethical decision making, Cooper stated that his program could benefit from "some sort of formalized class or discussion about what is ethical and what isn't ethical". He continued to explain that he had never had a conversation about what really is ethical and what is not ethical in regards to academics. "You kind of I guess just have to figure it out somehow," he noted. When we spoke, Cooper had completed his course requirements and was completing the dissertation phase of his degree.

My interviews with students resulted in a pattern relating to their perceptions of high academic rigor in the program in relation to how they would rate their program as a whole. Interestingly, those who spoke about how their program challenged them on an academic and personal level had more to say about their opinions of academic honesty and its importance. This may because these students seemed to view themselves as more involved in the academic community, not simply going through the motions of completing the degree. This goes back to the belief of McCabe and Makowski (2001) that being more active within the campus community will create a sense of community and cause individuals to feel more as though they are a part of the environment rather than on the peripheral.

When asked if she finds her graduate program academically challenging, Zoe, a Business PhD student commented:

> Definitely. Our coursework is very challenging. I ended up started research before I even started coursework so all along I have had all of these research projects going alongside everything else. So it was academically challenging. So, I just have a lot of balls in the air so that is definitely a challenge, but a challenge that I do say, pinch me is this real?

For a student such as Zoe, it makes perfect sense to her that people should simply know better than to engage in dishonest academic practices. It has not been an issue that academic integrity is not something that is directly addressed in her graduate program, because she understands what is expected of her and how she should engage in academic practices. She noted that she is building a career that is based on her honor and has "a lot more at stake" if someone catches her being dishonest. In his discussion of labeling theory, Kitsuse (1962) focused on the "processes by which persons come to be defined as deviant by others" (p.248). Zoe's awareness of the negative impact of being labeled as dishonest impacts her opinions on the matter. In regards to whether the culture of her program promotes ethical decision making, Zoe responded:

> I would say so. I think it's assumed. I don't know that it's promoted. When I think of the word promotion, it would be something we talk about. I think it is just simply assumed that it's how we are going to be.

This point of assuming that ethical decision making is expected in the graduate program was made by additional respondents, as well. Most of the people interviewed expressed that while it may not be explicitly discussed with them, they understand that cheating is not appropriate.

Research Question #1.b

To what extent do the ethical or unethical academic practices of the instructor impact the actions of graduate students?

The attitudes and perceptions that a student has about those around him or her in the academic discipline and program and the university as a whole affects their experiences in graduate school and the perceptions they have about what is ethical academic behavior. Zoe Nooyi, a student in the Business Administration PhD program, Marketing track, for example, spoke very highly of her faculty mentor and attributes a lot of her own personal success to the support that she has received from her mentor throughout her time in the doctoral program. Students whose perceptions were not as favorable of the mentorship provided by the program did not speak negatively about their advisors, but did not mention them as strong positive influences in their academic success either. In one instance, a respondent was aware of a specific negative behavior on the part of a program faculty member. In response to whether he has witnessed any of his faculty engaging in academic dishonesty, Cooper Currie (Chemistry PhD) stated,

> Interestingly enough, one of the faculty members here has just gotten slapped for some ethical stuff and his entire research group had to go through an ethics course mandated by the university. So, yes, it happens and it is happening and it will continue to happen. There were multiple publications that were discovered to have some "iffy" stuff in them. It definitely comes up a lot in publications. I mean, there are certain institutions that if you get a paper from that institution our research advisor will tell us don't even bother reading it because it's not even worth your time because of the likelihood of it being completely bogus.

As mentioned, differences arose among respondents in terms of their perceptions of how the faculty's behavior has influenced their views of the integrity of the graduate program in general. Respondents, such as Grace in Applied Sociology, David in Texts and Technology, and Olivia in Applied Learning Education were quick to answer "No", when asked if they have witnessed faculty engaging in academic dishonesty. Other respondents, such as Cooper Curie (Chemistry PhD) and Max Jobs (Computer Science PhD) shared more in-depth responses regarding their

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perceptions of how faculty represented themselves and their expectations for their students'

research. Riley Gray, a student in the Marriage and Family Therapy MA program also expressed

her opinions about the ways in which the faculty engaged in academic dishonesty. Riley stated,

> I know that this particular professor doesn't show up for classes, follow the syllabus, do
> what is expected of her as a teacher, and I feel that's dishonest for the university to allow
> something like that to happen. Normally she would email us twenty minutes before class
> started that she was canceling the class. There was another faculty I had for an online
> course and in the middle of the semester she stopped responding to everyone's emails or
> grading papers, so I feel as far as the honesty and commitment that's deserved by the
> students, there are some issues, but in general, lying, cheating, stuff like that, I don't
> think there's an issue with most of the professors.

It is important to note, however, that while Riley made statements regarding issues with

one faculty member, she also indicated that overall, her program faculty members are good

mentors to their students. "I don't think there's a single professor we have that doesn't have

experience so having professors who have worked in the field or currently work in the field is

great," she stated.

Research Question #2

What differences currently exist among graduate students with regard to perceived opportunity to

engage in academic dishonesty, student attitudes, and definitions of appropriate academic

sharing?

The online survey portion of this study included the following statement, "In graduate

school, it is acceptable to collaborate on assignments, even if the work is supposed to be

completed independently". Respondents were asked to indicate whether they strongly agree,

agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. Of the 1,215 people who responded to the question, 15%

(n=187) agreed or strongly agreed that it is acceptable to collaborate on work, even if the assignment is meant to be completed independently. Of the 187 respondents, 122 were master's students and 56 were pursuing doctoral degrees, while another 5 were pursuing a master's and doctoral degree concurrently. Of the 1,247 people who responded to whether they find it difficult to balance graduate school and personal relationships, 39% (n=484) stated that frequently or very frequently find it difficult. Emile Durkheim's concept of anomie included the idea of acute anomie, which results from an abrupt change in one's life (Wallace and Wolf, 1999). Entering graduate school can certainly change the dynamics of one's existing personal life and as is evident by the survey responses, can make it difficult for individuals to maintain balance in their lives. Of the 39% of respondents who stated that they at least frequently find it difficult to balance graduate school and personal relationships, 17 respondents agreed or strongly agreed on the online survey that it is acceptable to include the research and ideas of authoritative sources in course assignments, without including citations. Only two respondents who indicated it is frequently difficult to balance their school and personal lives answered that they have submitted someone else's academic work and claimed it as their own. Interestingly, when asked if universities should require ethics training for all graduate students who are involved in research, of the 1,212 total respondents, 84% (n=1,022) agreed or strongly agreed, indicating that the majority of graduate students do see a need for such training. Of the 1,022 people who agree that ethics training is needed in universities, 64% (n=653) indicated on the survey that graduate students who are caught cheating should have the offense listed on their university transcript.

Students' opinions of what constitutes acceptable behavior in regards to academic dishonesty varied in both the online survey and the face-to-face interviews, although those who

made comparisons between graduate and undergraduate education shared a common emphasis that the opportunity to engage in academic dishonesty exists to a greater extent in the undergraduate culture. As individuals progress into their graduate careers, there tends to be a greater realization that engaging in academic dishonesty during that period of one's life could have serious negative consequences on a person's career aspirations, particularly if that career is within academia. This point supports rational choice theory due to the fact that at this stage of their academic careers, these students recognize that the potential consequences of cheating outweigh the potential benefits.

In a primarily online program, a student's experience and interactions with faculty can be vastly different from the experiences had by students in programs where the majority of interactions take place in a face-to-face setting. In fact, according to Brooke, a student in the Nursing MSN program, she had never really had the opportunity to develop relationships with faculty members in the program. As a result, the faculty and program in general exert less moral influence because of the mode of program delivery. This can potentially result in the student feeling lost with little guidance to help him or her achieve success through legitimate means. "It's very disconnected because of the nature of the program," she stated. As a part-time student, Brooke has had limited interactions with her advisor aside from developing a plan of study. Despite that, she felt that having the program in an online format is appropriate for her field of study. Brooke's academic program in particular focuses on training nurse educators. She described in her interview that there are aspects of ethical practice for nurses and nurse educators in training that have to be learned. However, the design of the program and the admissions

process may not be supporting those program goals from this particular student's view point. In regards to the structure of her graduate program, Brooke continued by saying:

> I think being online is fine for my field, but I think that's because I have had experience teaching in multiple different ways. So I feel comfortable. I have no problem with that, but I wonder about the new people; the little RN's that go directly from their RN's to master's. They have only worked for a year and then they barely know nursing, let alone teaching nursing. Sometimes when you have to talk to a patient and you have to have that come to Jesus talk with them, that's something you have to learn through experience; you don't get that with this program.

During the interview process, respondents brought up a number of different things when asked to define academic honestly, but a point that was raised by most interviewees was that it is not appropriate to claim someone else's work or ideas as your own. Responses included, "The main one in social sciences is not using your own ideas or not giving someone credit when they have inspired your idea," "anything from cheating, plagiarizing, shifting data, not being forthcoming in methodology," "fudging data", "manipulation of data", "carelessness with your data", "saying that you did something that you maybe didn't".

When it comes to opportunity, certain inferences can be made based on the responses received in the online survey and interviews. For example, when asked to define academic honesty in the interview, one respondent stated, "I know teachers will tell you for online classes, if they give you a quiz, that you are not supposed to refer back to the PowerPoint. I disagree with that, but you know, that's their rule, but they are not there to check it." The online survey asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "Most students use unauthorized course materials on assignments in online courses, even if the resources are not permitted by the instructor." Of the 1,191 respondents, 20% (n=234) agreed or strongly agreed

that students do use the resources to aid them in the course, even if they are told not to by the instructor. While these results pertain to online instruction only, it does speak to the fact that some people believe that when the opportunity is there to engage in the negative behavior without the likelihood of being caught, individuals will engage in the dishonest behavior.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted by Ashworth, Bannister, and Thorne (1997), research on cheating is often conducted solely through questionnaires that are written with the assumption that students have a shared understanding of what constitutes academic dishonesty. Interview responses gathered throughout this study indicate that opinions on what constitutes academic dishonesty vary based on student perceptions. Especially for the doctoral students in the sample, their views were highly influenced by viewing themselves as teachers and independent researchers. For a number of these students, it was clear that earning a doctoral degree could have a major impact on their careers and that they would not risk jeopardizing their plans by engaging in unethical academic behaviors. The data reveal that behaviors such as using someone else's words or ideas in an assignment or publication without giving credit is commonly agreed upon by graduate students as being unethical and worthy of negative sanctions against the student, such as the cheating offense being noted on a university transcript. However, what graduate students more commonly struggle with is the subtleties of cheating, such as misrepresentation or "fudging" of research data.

This study introduces a sociological perspective and builds upon the notion of Ashworth et al. (1997) that we need to have a better understanding of the students' perceptions of academic dishonesty. The findings of this doctoral dissertation indicate that it is the student's experience in his or her graduate program and how he or she perceives the culture of the program that has the most significant impact on his or her perception and understanding of appropriate academic sharing.

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

How graduate students define and understand appropriate academic sharing can be shaped by their experiences in the graduate program, including how they see themselves in relation to other students, the ways in which the faculty advisors provide mentorship, and the overall culture of the program at the institution. The purpose of this research study was to learn more about the role that the culture of the program or of the individual plays in a students' ethical decision-making process in relation to higher education. This study took a sociological approach and argues that cheating among graduate students should not be understood only as an individual moral failing, but rather, that the emphasis should be on the role of culture in graduate programs and students' socialization into those cultures.

The study took place in two phases (an online survey and interviews), with the quantitative data (online survey) providing a foundation for the creation of the interview questions for the second phase of the research. I was interested in the impact of culture on the ethical perspectives of students in graduate programs at the University of Central Florida and aimed to use their perspectives to help determine the impact culture has on ethical decision-making in graduate school. In particular, I investigated the challenges students face in graduate programs and gained insight into their perceptions of the culture of their academic discipline at their particular institution. I also gained a better understanding of how students identify and define appropriate academic sharing.

Discussion of the Findings

Most prior research on academic dishonesty used surveys rather than interview data. However, through in-depth interviews with six master's students at a large, public university, Love and Simmons (1998) found that a number of factors, including situational, environmental, and personal characteristics, affect a student's decision to cheat. Furthermore, they found that the students had a basic understanding of the definitions of cheating but that there remained some actions that students were unaware of or unclear about (Love and Simmons, 1998). I aimed to build upon the existing literature, such as the research by Love and Simmons (1998), by talking with students from a number of colleges and programs at the university and gaining a better understanding of how students' understanding of academic sharing varies across academic disciplines.

Based on their study results, Anderson and Obenshain (1991) concluded that "the emotional ambiance of an academic environment is an important influence on students' behaviors" (p.329). They further noted that it is in the best interest of faculty to "define the culture that they think should characterize the institution" and "develop a strategy to ensure that this culture will be experienced and hopefully internalized by each and every student" (p.329). As part of this dissertation research, I was interested in learning more about the current culture in various programs and whether there are consistent norms or program characteristics across disciplines. Overall, results of the study indicate that students most often regard their faculty as ethical individuals. Survey results indicated that 90% (n=1,116) of graduate student respondents think that their professors encourage academic integrity and set good examples in their own research. However, during the in-depth interviews, it became more evident that in the cases

where faculty members have demonstrated unethical behavior, witnessing or learning about these behaviors through their experiences in the graduate program has impacted the individual student's view of whether the program promotes ethical decision-making.

By examining the graduate culture through a sociological lens, I found that how the graduate students I spoke with define and understand appropriate academic sharing most commonly depends on their experiences within the program. Most existing literature views cheating as an individual failing rather than a sociological or organizational phenomenon, but this study takes into account a sociological analysis of cheating and explores how students view the culture of their graduate programs and how they fit into that culture. Based on the interviews conducted as part of this doctoral dissertation, it is the subtleties of cheating that are least understood and of perhaps the most concern to students as they navigate the challenges of graduate school.

The responses received in this study indicate that students want to engage in ethical academic behavior and want be educated on the matter. While deciding to engage in cheating behaviors is commonly an individual choice, social and organizational factors do affect students and can influence students' behaviors. For example, Kucuktepe (2014) found that while engaging in cheating behaviors related to examinations, students may find other students who are also cheating and then proceed to actually cheat from each other's papers. Therefore, in the case of the Kucuktepe (2014) study, students' decisions to further engage in the deviant act was impacted by what those around them were doing with regard to the cheating behaviors.

Prior research on academic integrity and ethics in higher education regularly suggests that there is a connection between academic dishonesty and self-concept or narcissism (Brunell, Staats, Barden, and Hupp, 2011). As Brunell et al. (2011) note, certain people are "willing to cheat to get their way to the top" (p.327). This behavior might result from a variety of factors, including, but not limited to the fact that students do not always have stellar role models who set a high moral standard in the academic program, or perhaps in some cases, because the pressure to produce research and publications at almost any cost leaves the individuals feeling as though they have no alternatives. While I agree that the choice to commit the act is that of the individual, we must also consider the social element and the influence that the culture of both the person and of the academic program has on the cheating behavior. Cheating is so often viewed as an individual failing rather than a result of a person's socialization within the culture of the graduate program. However, the findings of this doctoral research help demonstrate that differences exist with regard to the academic discipline and the expectations or perceived expectations for student success.

<u>Scholarly Significance</u>

Universities, as well as entities such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) are placing increasing emphasis on the importance of addressing ethics in graduate programs. In fact, in June 2014, the NSF solicited proposals addressing how to cultivate cultures for ethical STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs. This NSF program funds research projects that address the cultural and institutional contexts that promote ethical STEM research and practice ("National Science Foundation," 2014). The findings of this doctoral dissertation support the fact that ethics training is needed not only at the university level, but in

the graduate programs, as well, as is indicated by the recent push by the National Science Foundation for more studies on the topic.

In addition to revealing some interesting dynamics that exist within certain academic disciplines at the university, the results of this study also help identify the challenges graduate students face and the determinants of ethical beliefs towards academic dishonesty. Results indicate that students want to receive ethics training and to have open dialogue with program faculty about what constitutes appropriate academic conduct. The findings of this study contribute to the literature by filling in some of the gaps related to graduate students' concerns over the more subtle forms of academic dishonesty that are not regularly discussed. This examination of the diverse perspectives and ethical experiences of graduate students can produce recommendations for universities related to the development of ethics education programs for students and faculty and provide relevant information regarding how the norms and expectations of an academic discipline impact graduate students' understanding of appropriate academic sharing. One such recommendation is for more direct dialogue to take place among faculty and students about what constitutes plagiarism and self-plagiarism. We make assumptions that graduate students are well-informed and familiar with policies on plagiarism, but the reality is some students need guidance in relation to plagiarism and other matters of ethical decision-making. Syllabi, for example, often include a standard statement about the consequences of cheating but the discussion of appropriate practices is not directly addressed. Although this was not a topic specifically addressed in this study, I would speculate that the way that the topic is framed within the course documentation can create a sense of fear for the student over the possible negative sanctions, but not necessarily a better understanding of the subject and best

practices in research. It would be ideal if the expectations of the program and faculty are clear

and the students have the resources that they need to be successful.

The online survey results of this study showed that 38% (n=472) of the respondents

found the workload in their graduate courses to be unmanageable, at least occasionally.

Interviews with individuals from a variety of disciplines also indicated that keeping up with

challenging academic work, alongside family and oftentimes, research and/or teaching

obligations make time management a real struggle for some people. One of the primary

purposes of this dissertation was to analyze and better understand the social and organizational

factors affecting students. This study provides some insight into the differing viewpoints among

students within fourteen different academic programs, including seven master's level programs,

one terminal MFA program, and six doctoral programs at a large metropolitan university in the

Southeastern United States.

<div align="center">Theoretical Interpretations</div>

The theoretical framework for this dissertation research was based on three sociological

theories: anomie theory, rational choice theory, and labeling theory. The sociological analysis of

the data provided interesting insight into the students' perspectives on appropriate academic

sharing and regarding the culture of their graduate programs.

Anomie theory helps explain deviance in relation to a person's social disorganization and

looks at the means by which an individual goes about achieving his or her status goals (Clinard

and Meier, 2008). In graduate education, students and faculty are often put in positions of

making decisions that could impact their life educational and/or career goals. In many cases,

these decisions are made without a great deal of guidance from others or a clear model to look to as an example.

Similarly, by looking at the data of this study through the lens of rational choice theory, we see that some students weigh the costs and benefits of their decisions and act according to what they find will be most beneficial with the least amount of risk to their academic or professional careers. For example, as Zoe Nooyi, a Business PhD student noted in her interview, it was clear that to her, receiving a doctoral degree is a pathway to a career in academia. She recognized that engaging in dishonest academic behavior would jeopardize that career and based on her comments, assumed that other students and faculty within the discipline make the same assumption. When asked if she had witnessed students engaging in what she would consider to be academic dishonesty related to graduate education she stated,

> I think it is considered a lot more acceptable at the undergraduate level or even in the MBA. When I was doing my MBA program, I think there were definitely students that would have been willing to look at my exam, for example. While in the PhD level, we did our comprehensive exams in a room by ourselves where the professor would walk in once every hour to just see if we have questions, but I think it's the nature of the program. We are expected to now have careers that are based on the honor system, so watching over my shoulder wouldn't seem appropriate.

While the same sentiments were not shared by all study participants, Zoe's statements represent a theme that was common among the doctoral students interviewed that at this stage in their educational careers, it would be foolish to intentionally engage in unethical academic behavior due to the possible consequences to their reputations and academic and potentially, their professional careers.

In regards to labeling theory and its relevance to this study, as previously noted, labeling theory does not address the motivating factors related to the initial deviant behavior. However, it is a valuable theory for use in the analysis of the continuation of cheating behaviors. The results of this study actually contradict labeling theory, in that findings suggest that in graduate school, when labeled as someone who has cheated, the individual is not as likely to re-offend due to the nature of the academic environment.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Future Research</div>

Effective with the Fall 2011 term, the University of Central Florida began requiring all newly admitted doctoral students to complete training "designed to inculcate an awareness and understanding of the fundamental issues of academic integrity and the responsible conduct of research (RCR) in a manner that is consistent with federal regulations" ("UCF College of Graduate Studies,") . Given what I have learned through this research, I would be interested to survey and speak with graduate students who have completed the academic integrity training and identify any major differences with regard to their understanding of appropriate academic sharing in comparison to the results of this study. A next step for this research may include looking at ways to incorporate discussions of the academic culture in academic integrity trainings and determine the impact of the training on the students' perceptions and definitions of appropriate academic sharing. Furthermore, as a follow-up to this study, I would like to conduct an online survey of all active graduate students at the university and include questions related to the new university ethics training. It would be interesting to know whether the opinions of current students who have gone through the training are significantly different from the students in this study. I would also recommend the inclusion of a more diverse sample, including more

international students. If conducting further research on this in the future, I would also incorporate interviews with program faculty to gain a better understanding of their views on academic honesty and how the topic is addressed within the program.

<div align="center">Conclusions</div>

I began my research wanting to learn more about graduate students' experiences in their programs, their understanding of academic sharing, and what challenges are most common among the group, in hopes of providing some insight into these matters to help contribute to the existing knowledge regarding academic honesty in graduate education. Results indicate that while graduate students are often presumed to be relatively autonomous and more self-regulating than undergraduates, when faced with complicated ethical issues, they still want and need guidance related to ethics in higher education and value the role of a strong mentor.

The study's first phase included responses from approximately 1,250 active graduate students to an array of questions pertaining to their perceptions of their graduate program and whether they are being challenged academically. The focus of the questions included, but was not limited to, whether they struggle financially, which 64% (n=791) of the respondents to the question stated they did at least occasionally, and whether they found it difficult to balance graduate school and their personal relationships, which of the 1,245 respondents to the question, 77% (n=958) did, at least occasionally. Another aspect of the online survey related to perceptions of academic dishonesty and what takes place within their particular program with regard to appropriate academic sharing. This included questions specifically asking if the respondent had submitted someone else's academic work and claimed it as his or her own, as

well as a question related to whether or not the respondent has used someone else's words or ideas in an assignment without acknowledging the source. While most respondents answered that they had never done either of those two things, 25% (n=97) of doctoral respondents and 25% (n=212) of active master's students claimed to have used someone else's words or ideas in an assignment without acknowledging the source, indicating the need for additional education on the subject of plagiarism and academic integrity.

Based on the findings of this study, how graduate students define and understand appropriate academic sharing relates to their socialization within the program. As noted by Ashworth et al. (1997), students' views on cheating may be based on their ethics, but their opinions are also influenced by the parameters of the situation and the regulations established by the institution; as such, academic values "need to be inculcated". The survey responses indicate that overall, the university is providing the resources that graduate students need to be academically successful. Of the 1,238 responses received about whether the university has the resources needed (faculty, program staff, and/or other university resources) for him or her to be academically successful, 84% (n=1,036) agreed or strongly agreed. However, despite students stating that there are sufficient resources offered by the university, the majority of respondents still indicated that they struggle to find a balance between school and personal relationships. Perhaps if the students are enculturated into the graduate community and equipped with the necessary skills to manage the stresses of graduate school, we should see a decrease in the number of students struggling.

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL FROM UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL

FLORIDA

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
          FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Jennifer Parham**

Date: **December 08, 2011**

Dear Researcher:

On 12/8/2011, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EXAMINATION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS' DEFINITIONS AND UNDERSTANDING OF APPROPRIATE ACADEMIC SHARING
Investigator:	Jennifer Parham
IRB Number:	SBE-11-07948
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 12/08/2011 03:09:34 PM EST

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FOR ONLINE SURVEY

PARTICIPANTS

Phase I Consent (page 1 of online survey)

Principal Investigator(s): Jennifer Parham, MA
Faculty Supervisor: David Boote, PhD Investigational Site(s): University of Central Florida

You are being invited to take part in a research study because you are a graduate student at the university of Central Florida.

The person doing this research is Jennifer Parham, a doctoral student at the University of Central Florida. Because the researcher is a graduate student, she is being guided by Dr. David Boote, a UCF faculty supervisor in UCF's College of Education.

The purpose of this study is to identify the challenges students face in graduate education and to make connections between those challenges and the determinants of ethical beliefs towards academic dishonesty.

Participants in this phase of the research project will be asked to participate in an anonymous web-based survey and answer questions related to the challenges of graduate school and ethical decision-making in higher education.

The online survey will take approximately 15 minutes.

The online survey portion of this study is anonymous. That means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information you gave came from you. The interviews conducted throughout the course of this study will be confidential.

The online survey is the first phase of a two-phase study. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in this study. At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you wish to participate in the second phase of the study, which involves a face-to-face interview with Jennifer Parham. If you are interested in participating in the interview phase, please email jparham@knights.ucf.edu as instructed at the conclusion of the online survey. Your email will in no way be connected to your responses to the anonymous online survey.

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to Jennifer Parham, Graduate Student, Education EdD Program, College of Education, at Jparham@knights.ucf.edu or Dr. David Boote, Faculty Supervisor, College of Education at (407) 823-4260 or by email at david.boote@ucf.edu.

Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research &

Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

1. I am 18 years or older and agree to participate in this study.

○ Yes
○ No

Next

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

(Phase II Research)

Informed Consent

Principal Investigator(s):   Jennifer Parham, MA
Faculty Supervisor: David Boote, PhD
Investigational Site(s):   University of Central Florida

The purpose of this study is to identify the challenges students face in graduate education and to make connections between those challenges and the determinants of ethical beliefs towards academic dishonesty.

Participants in this phase of the research project will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview and answer questions related to the challenges of graduate school and ethical decision-making in higher education.

The researcher will limit your personal data collected in this study to people who have a need to review this information. Your participation in this study will remain completely anonymous.

You will be audio taped during this study. If you do not want to be audio taped, you may still participate in the study; pleased discuss this with the researcher prior to the interview. If you are audio taped, the tape will be kept in a locked, safe place that is only accessible by the researcher. The tape will be erased or destroyed within six months following the completion of the study.

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to Jennifer Parham, Graduate Student, Education EdD Program, College of Education, at Jparham@knights.ucf.edu or Dr. David Boote, Faculty Supervisor, College of Education at (407) 823-4260 or by email at david.boote@ucf.edu.

Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

APPENDIX D: ONLINE SURVEY

Ethical Decision-Making in Higher Education

Principal Investigator(s): Jennifer Parham, MA
Faculty Supervisor: David Boote, PhD Investigational Site(s): University of Central Florida

You are being invited to take part in a research study because you are a graduate student at the university of Central Florida.

The person doing this research is Jennifer Parham, a doctoral student at the University of Central Florida. Because the researcher is a graduate student, she is being guided by Dr. David Boote, a UCF faculty supervisor in UCF's College of Education.

The purpose of this study is to identify the challenges students face in graduate education and to make connections between those challenges and the determinants of ethical beliefs towards academic dishonesty.

Participants in this phase of the research project will be asked to participate in an anonymous web-based survey and answer questions related to the challenges of graduate school and ethical decision-making in higher education.

The online survey will take approximately 15 minutes.

The online survey portion of this study is anonymous. That means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information you gave came from you. The interviews conducted throughout the course of this study will be confidential.

The online survey is the first phase of a two-phase study. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in this study. At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you wish to participate in the second phase of the study, which involves a face-to-face interview with Jennifer Parham. If you are interested in participating in the interview phase, please email jparham@knights.ucf.edu as instructed at the conclusion of the online survey. Your email will in no way be connected to your responses to the anonymous online survey.

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to Jennifer Parham, Graduate Student, Education EdD Program, College of Education, at Jparham@knights.ucf.edu or Dr. David Boote, Faculty Supervisor, College of Education at (407) 823-4260 or by email at david.boote@ucf.edu.

Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

1. I am 18 years or older and agree to participate in this study.

- ⃝ Yes
- ⃝ No

Ethical Decision-Making in Higher Education

2. I generally find the workload in my graduate courses manageable.

○ Never

○ Rarely

○ Occasionally

○ Frequently

○ Very frequently

3. I feel overwhelmed by the research requirements of my graduate program.

○ Never

○ Rarely

○ Occasionally

○ Frequently

○ Very frequently

4. I struggle financially to pay for graduate school.

○ Never

○ Rarely

○ Occasionally

○ Frequently

○ Very frequently

5. I find it difficult to balance graduate school and my personal relationships.

○ Never

○ Rarely

○ Occasionally

○ Frequently

○ Very frequently

Ethical Decision-Making in Higher Education

6. I am satisfied with the level of mentoring that I receive from my academic adviser.

- ○ Never
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Occasionally
- ○ Frequently
- ○ Very frequently

7. I entered graduate school prepared for the challenges that I have faced.

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

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8. My academic program is more challenging than most other programs at the university.

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

9. My academic program is very competitive, which makes it difficult for students to successfully advance and graduate.

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

10. The university has the resources I need (faculty, program staff, and/or other university resources) to help me to learn what I need to learn to be academically successful.

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

11. My professors encourage academic integrity and set good examples in their own research.

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Not applicable

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12. I am at a disadvantage compared to other students because English is not my primary language.

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Not applicable

13. I feel comfortable asking my peers for help with course assignments.

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

14. It is acceptable to include the research and ideas of authoritative sources in course assignments, without including citations.

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

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Ethical Decision-Making in Higher Education

15. Most students use unauthorized course materials on assignments in online courses, even if the resources are not permitted by the instructor.

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

16. In graduate school, it is acceptable to collaborate on assignments, even if the work is supposed to be completed independently.

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

17. Graduate students who are caught cheating should have the offense listed on their university transcript.

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

18. Universities should require ethics training for all graduate students who are involved in research.

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

19. If I knew that someone cheated on an assignment, I would inform the instructor.

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Ethical Decision-Making in Higher Education

20. I have submitted someone else's academic work and claimed it as my own.

- ○ Never
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Occasionally
- ○ Frequently
- ○ Very frequently

21. I have used someone else's words or ideas in an assignment without acknowledging the source.

- ○ Never
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Occasionally
- ○ Frequently
- ○ Very frequently

22. It is understandable for graduate students to falsify their research data because of the pressures to publish the research.

- ○ Never
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Ethical Decision-Making in Higher Education

23. What is your gender?

○ Female

○ Male

○ Transgender

○ Intersex

24. What is your race?

○ American Indian or Alaska Native

○ Asian

○ Black or African American

○ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

○ White

○ Other (please specify)

[ ]

25. What is your ethnicity?

○ Hispanic or Latino

○ Not Hispanic or Latino

26. What is your United States citizenship status?

○ Asylee

○ Native

○ Naturalized

○ Permanent Resident Alien

○ Temporary Resident (International student)

27. Which of the following ranges includes your age?

○ 18-25

○ 26-33

○ 34-41

○ 42 or older

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Ethical Decision-Making in Higher Education

28. Did you attend high school in the United States?

○ Yes

○ No

29. Have you graduated with a degree (undergraduate or graduate) from an educational institution in the United States?

○ Yes

○ No

30. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?

○ Bachelor's degree (for example: BA, BS, BFA)

○ Master's or specialist degree (for example: MA, MS, MBA, MEd, MFA, MSW)

○ Professional degree (for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)

○ Doctorate degree (for example: EdD, DPT, DNP, PhD)

31. In what college(s) are you currently pursuing a graduate degree?

☐ Arts and Humanities

☐ Business Administration

☐ Education

☐ Engineering and Computer Science

☐ Graduate Studies

☐ Health and Public Affairs

☐ Hospitality Management

☐ Medicine

☐ Nursing

☐ Optics and Photonics

☐ Sciences

32. Please select whether you are active in a master's or doctoral program at UCF (choose all that apply).

☐ Master's (including MFA and Specialist programs)

☐ Doctoral

Ethical Decision-Making in Higher Education

33. Are you interested in participating in a face-to-face interview (phase II of this study) to discuss your experiences with graduate education at UCF? If so, please contact Jennifer Parham at jparham@knights.ucf.edu.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

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