

THE FREQUENCY AND PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC  
DISHONESTY AMONG GRADUATE STUDENTS:

A LITERATURE REVIEW AND  
CRITICAL ANALYSIS

by

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ABSTRACT

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Academic Dishonesty is a topic that has been in the public eye recently, due to corporate scandals such as Enron and WorldCom. Academic dishonesty appears to be a precursor to workplace dishonesty, and research investigations on academic dishonesty over the past several decades have reported that the problem may be growing among university students. Much of the available research looks at the frequency, causes and perceptions of academic dishonesty among undergraduate students.

This research project constitutes a review and critical analysis of the literature regarding the frequency, causes, perceptions and preventions of academic dishonesty. The purpose of this research is to propose a study to evaluate how often graduate level students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout

engage in academically dishonest behaviors, and what their perceptions are of academic dishonesty.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Dishonesty, both in academic and employment sectors, has been a part of the human condition since ancient times. In ancient China, civil service job applicants were separated during exams to prevent cheating, as the penalty for being caught was death (Jackson, Levine, Furnham & Burr, 2002). Today, employee theft is responsible for costing businesses somewhere between 5 and 50 billion dollars per year (Jackson et al., 2002). Either of those figures is staggering and forces the reader to give serious consideration to what that means as a taxpayer. Academically, we have been dealing with dishonesty for just as long. The idea of plagiarism was born from the evolution of oral tradition into written word. There was a time in human history when written language did not exist, and history was passed verbally from one generation to the next. Cultures still exist in the world today that rely on oral tradition rather than the written word to pass on stories and information ([www.turtleisland.org](http://www.turtleisland.org)). For example, some Mayan dialects have just begun to take on written form in the last few decades, but most members of Mayan communities still rely on the oral word as they do not read or write. According to Jeffers (2002), in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the use of movable type was invented, increasing the reproduction of texts and by the 17<sup>th</sup> century the concept of “intellectual property” was formed; “intellectual property” being defined as any novel idea that a person has created. Jeffers goes on to say that “To steal someone’s paragraph or patent was at least cause for public exposure and disgrace” (pg. 56).

Academic dishonesty can be defined in many different ways. Jeffers (2002) includes cheating, not citing a source, and changing another's words around to make it look as though they were one's own idea in his definitions of academic dishonesty. Moeck (2002) adds the abuse or destruction of materials, which would end in a student not being able to use them to the list of definitions for academic dishonesty. The University of Wisconsin-Stout's definition of an academically dishonest behavior includes; seeking to claim credit for the work of another, forging or falsifying documents, using unauthorized or fabricated data, and damaging the work of others. There is evidence that these types of behaviors have been increasing over the past several decades.

According to numerous studies, academic dishonesty is more prevalent than ever and actions need to be taken by universities to educate students about academic integrity (Clayton, 1999; Morales, 2000; Groark, Oblinger, & Ochoa, 2001). Studies show that the current levels of academic dishonesty are as high as 80% when students self-report having engaged in academic dishonesty (Clayton, 1999) to 99% reporting that others have engaged in such behaviors (Greene & Saxe, 1992). One study reported 88% of faculty members as having witnessed academically dishonest behaviors in their students (Morales, 2000). With numbers this high, whether or not academic dishonesty is on the rise, it is a serious concern that the education system needs to address.

### **Ethical and Legal Considerations**

Academic dishonesty is not simply a "bad habit" type of behavior that should not be accepted by society, it is also unethical and in many instances, against the law.



Academic dishonesty is considered to be an ethical issue across all domains of academia and within many professions. For example, academic dishonesty is addressed in the ethical principles of several major professions including counseling and psychology. In the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Professional Conduct Manual (NASP, 2000), section IV, F.6. states that “School Psychologists uphold copyright laws in their publications and presentations and obtain permission from authors and copyright holders to reproduce other publications or materials,” (pg.32). The American School Counselor Association’s (ASCA, 1998) Ethical Standards for School Counselors F.1(c) states that each counselor “conducts appropriate research and reports findings in a manner consistent with acceptable educational and psychological research practices” ([www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org), pg.3). In the American Psychological Association’s Ethical Principles (APA, 2002), Section 8.11, it is stated “psychologists do not present portions of another's work or data as their own, even if the other work or data source is cited occasionally” (pg. 12). It is clear that these accusations view dishonesty (academic or professional) as unethical behavior to be avoided by their members.

Academic dishonesty is not only an ethical concern, as forms of academic dishonesty may violate the law. Title 17 in the United States Code has been put into place to safeguard the work of authors, artists, and performers ([www.utm.edu](http://www.utm.edu)). Under United States Code Title 17, laws exist regarding forms of academic dishonesty such as plagiarism and copyright infringement (Copyright Act, 2003). According to the law, taking a portion of another person’s work without giving credit to the author can

constitute plagiarism, and a person who has plagiarized can be prosecuted in a court of law. Furthermore, copyright law automatically protects any work created in the United States of America after March 1989, whether or not there is a copyright notice attached, including personal letters. College students are not immune from copyright law.

Chapter 18 of the United States Code covers crimes including fraud, and states that anyone who commits a fraudulent behavior including falsifying material, making false statements or representation, or making or using a false writing or document can be fined or imprisoned for up to five years (Crimes and Criminal Procedures Act, 2003). Using written or other materials that are the intellectual property of another should be done with respect for the creator and appropriate citation. This should be done not only out of respect for another's thoughts and ideas, but because the law requires it.

Several cases of academic dishonesty have reached the legal system and have set precedent for how the judicial system addresses academic dishonesty. For example, in the case of *Napolitano vs. Princeton University* (1982) a woman plagiarized a paper for her Spanish class from a book, and consequently her degree was suspended. She sued the university, but the court ruled against her because not only had she plagiarized, but she had also lied about the authenticity of her paper. The case established a legal precedent upholding punishment of scholarly plagiarism and Napolitano's degree was withheld for one year (Standler, 2000; *Napolitano v. Princeton University*, 1982).

In a case from the University of Tennessee, a Ph. D. candidate named D.A. Faulkner copied much of his dissertation from research reports written by his advisor.

One year after receiving his degree, due to the discovery of his plagiarism, the faculty began the revocation process. When the case went to court, it found not only Faulkner at fault, but his advisors and three others as well. The court felt that Faulkner, as an intelligent individual, should have seen his fault in the situation. The case was summarized with the concurrence that awarding degrees to students who have not earned them would decrease the value of degrees in general (Standler, 2000; Faulkner v. University of Tennessee, 1994).

### ***The Prevention of Academic Dishonesty***

To avoid acts of academic dishonesty ending in court battles, many universities have been working towards a solution to the problem of academic dishonesty. Some universities are choosing to use strategies that put an emphasis on student leadership, such as students forming committees and becoming part of the disciplinary process, or participation in the education of the student body about academic dishonesty (McCabe & Pavela, 2000). Some school such as the University of Minnesota, Saint Olaf College and Lawrence University have installed honor code systems to which their students are held accountable ([www.academicintegrity.org/inst\\_members.asp](http://www.academicintegrity.org/inst_members.asp)). The University of Wisconsin-Stout has chosen to address academic dishonesty through published policy. The University of Wisconsin-Stout Student Handbook, found online at [www.uwstout.edu/shb/](http://www.uwstout.edu/shb/), clearly defines what constitutes academic dishonesty and the consequences that a student will face upon being caught. The University of Wisconsin-Stout defines cheating, fabrication, plagiarism and facilitating academic dishonesty as

acts of academic misconduct. Also included is forgery of academic documents or damaging the academic work of others. The University of Wisconsin Student Handbook outlines a series of steps that can be taken when a student has been accused of academic misconduct ([www.uwstout.edu/resolve/dishonest.html](http://www.uwstout.edu/resolve/dishonest.html)). The instructor can meet with the student regarding the incident. If no misconduct is found, the process will end.

However, if it is determined that the student has committed one of the forms of academic misconduct discussed in Section 14 of the Student Handbook, the instructor will decide upon the appropriate penalty. The penalty can range from an oral reprimand to probation, suspension or expulsion. For minor penalties including oral reprimand, re-assignment of work, taking a lower grade, and removal from the course, the student has 10 days to appeal the instructor's decision by requesting a hearing. If the penalty decided upon is probation, suspension or expulsion, a hearing is automatically required. If the student is found guilty during the hearing, there is another opportunity to appeal within 10 days to the chancellor. There is also an appeals process to the Board of Regents if the accused student decides to continue with the hearing process.

The University of Wisconsin Student Handbook is thorough and precise in describing what is expected of students, but there are issues in regards to accessing the information. This researcher, as a graduate student, did not know that the handbook was available until taking a class on the subject of legal and ethical issues. The handbook was very difficult to access while searching online, and several students in the class complained that they could not access the information on academic dishonesty that they

had been looking for. Having readily available information regarding rules and policies is an important step in creating a climate where students know what is expected of them and they can follow through accordingly.

### ***Purpose and Significance of Study***

Current research indicates although the majority of students feel it is wrong to do so, many students engage in academically dishonest behavior (Davis, Grover, Becker & McGregor, 1992). Furthermore, studies have found that students perceive academically dishonest behaviors to be normal behavior for students (Greene & Saxe, 1992). The majority of the available research on academic dishonesty focuses on the behaviors of undergraduate students while very little research is available on the behaviors of graduate students. The purpose of this paper is to review and analyze the literature regarding academic dishonesty and to propose a study to examine the perceptions and frequency of academic dishonesty among graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

The proposed study will attempt to determine how frequently academically dishonest behaviors occur among graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout as well as how graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout perceive academically dishonest behaviors.

### ***Proposed Research Questions***

This research will address the following questions:

- 1) How do graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout perceive academic dishonesty?
- 2) What is the percentage of full and part-time graduate students attending the University of Wisconsin-Stout who have engaged in academically dishonest behaviors in the past?
- 3) What is the percentage of full and part-time graduate students attending the University of Wisconsin-Stout who self-report that they are currently engaging in academically dishonest behaviors.
- 4) What types of academically dishonest behaviors do graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout engage in, and how frequently are they engaging in them?

### ***Definition of Terms***

For clarity of understanding, the following terms need to be defined according to the online version of the Oxford English Dictionary at [www.uwstout.edu/lib/serials/dbalpha.htm#OED](http://www.uwstout.edu/lib/serials/dbalpha.htm#OED).

Plagiarism- 1. The action or practice of plagiarizing; the wrongful appropriation or purloining, and publication as one's own, of the ideas, or the expression of the ideas (literary, artistic, musical, mechanical, etc.) of another.

Fabricate- 2. In bad sense: To 'make up'; to frame or invent (a legend, lie, etc.); to forge (a document). Or 1. d. Used for: To produce factitiously. *Obs.*

Cheat- 2. To defraud; to deprive of by deceit. 3. a. To deceive, impose upon, trick. b. To lead into (an action) by deception. 4.a. To deal fraudulently, practice deceit. 6. To obtain by cheating. 7. To suppress or adapt (part of a film) during editing so as to create a desired illusion.

Collusion- 1. Secret agreement or understanding for purposes of trickery or fraud; underhand scheming or working with another; deceit, fraud, trickery. 3. A trick, or ambiguity, in words or reasoning.

Copyright -1. The exclusive right given by law for a certain term of years to an author, composer, designer, etc. (or his assignee), to print, publishes, and sell copies of his original work. 2. Protected by copyright; not allowed by law to be printed or copied except by permission of the author, designer, etc.

### ***Assumptions and Limitations***

It is believed that when the proposed study is completed it will show that a high number of graduate students have engaged in academic dishonesty, which would concur with the current reported frequency rates (Clayton, 1999; Morales, 2000; Groark, et al., 2001). Furthermore, graduate students may be engaging in forms of academic dishonesty without perceiving that they are doing so. It is assumed that graduate students in this study will report engaging more frequently in the academically dishonest behaviors of collaborating with other students on individual assignments and assisting friends with papers or homework. The perceptions of graduate students toward academic dishonesty will most likely vary from the majority of the students perceiving it as unacceptable

behavior, to other students perceiving it as an acceptable means of succeeding in academia.

Some of the possible road blocks to discovering the frequency and perceptions of academic dishonesty among graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout might be untruthful responses, a low response rate, or over or under-reporting of academically dishonest behavior.



## CHAPTER II

### Review of Relevant Literature

When considering the issue of academic dishonesty, many questions come to mind. First of all, what is academic dishonesty, and what does one have to do to have engaged in academically dishonest behavior? Is it as complex as missing a paraphrase when citing a direct quotation, or as simple as helping a friend with their assignment. Some of the other questions that arise when thinking of the subject of academic dishonesty, and that this literature review will attempt to address include: Has the prevalence of academic dishonesty truly increased over time, or are students simply self-reporting more in recent studies? Is academic dishonesty becoming more accepted as a social norm by students and faculty alike? What drives students to cheat? Will academic dishonesty lead to dishonesty in the workplace? Finally, what can be done to prevent academic dishonesty in the education system?

This literature review will cover the entire spectrum of academic dishonesty including the frequency in which it is engaged, how it is perceived, and what causes it. The review will include reports regarding teachers' and students' perceptions of academic dishonesty, and whether students feel it is wrong or they feel that such behavior justifiable. Also, it will look at real-life situations and outcomes regarding academic and workplace dishonesty. This chapter will conclude by describing what methods have been looked at to discourage students from engaging in academic dishonesty.

### ***Defining Academic Dishonesty***

Academic dishonesty has been defined in many ways. In his 1964 study, Bowers described academic dishonesty as students engaging in dishonest behaviors not limited to activities such as plagiarizing and cheating. In his article, Jeffers (2002) outlines three different forms of plagiarism, which is one form of academic dishonesty. These include cheating, not citing a source, and changing another's words around to make it look as though they were one's own idea. According to Moeck (2002) academic dishonesty "can include the abuse of academic materials by destroying or altering portions of content" (pg. 481). This could include behaviors such as cheating off another student's test during an exam, plagiarizing by not citing the author, or damaging equipment so other students would not be able to use it (such as a computer software system). This researcher, as a current graduate student, defines academic dishonesty as any form of behavior that ends with the student having lied about his or her work. As a student of school psychology, the first behavior that comes to mind is plagiarizing a paper, and the second would be filling in test protocols with fake answers. One thing all of these definitions have in common is that they are describing behaviors that are not acceptable yet are found to be a constant problem on college campuses.

### ***Frequency of Academic Dishonesty***

Numerous reports over the past several decades indicate that the prevalence of academic dishonesty is increasing in our education system. Two seminal studies established a foundation for subsequent research on academic dishonesty. C. A. Drake

conducted one of the earliest pieces of research examining the subject of academic dishonesty in 1941. For his study, Drake looked at 126 students attending a women's college that contained an honor code system. The researcher gave exams to the students, secretly corrected them, and then gave them back to the students for self-grading. He found that 30 out of the 126 students, or 23%, had cheated while correcting their exams by changing their answers. These findings led Drake to conclude that the problem of academic dishonesty was grave and needed to be addressed by college campuses.

In 1964, William J. Bowers conducted a study, which suggested that the university system had greatly underestimated the magnitude of the problem of academic dishonesty. Bowers surveyed college students to find that a large number admitted to cheating in one form or another, and more than once. Bowers enacted his study in two stages: First he polled the college deans and student body presidents to find out what their perceptions were on what constitutes academic dishonesty, and how frequently students engage in it. He then sent surveys out to approximately 5,000 students and found that 2 out of 5, or approximately 40% engaged in academically dishonest behaviors. He also found that for violations of university policy, engaging in academic dishonesty was second only to disorderly conduct, which included alcohol consumption. The frequency of 40% was more than three times what the college deans had predicted it would be, and started many university systems thinking about the problem of academic dishonesty and how to stop it. Subsequent to the studies of Drake (1941) and Bowers (1964), numerous studies have been conducted to learn more about academic dishonesty.

In his article, which contained both a review of the available literature on academic dishonesty and an investigation, Baird (1980) discussed five different studies spanning 1941 to 1970 and found a frequency rate for academic dishonesty that ranged from 23% to 55%. Baird then conducted research of his own in which he looked at undergraduate students from several different fields of study, including business, liberal arts and education majors. The goal was to find the frequency rate of academic dishonesty for these students. Baird surveyed 200 students; 87 males and 113 females. He found that 89.5% of these college students had admitted to engaging in at least one of the various forms of academic dishonesty in either high school or college, and 75% had engaged in academic dishonesty while in college. Baird also discovered that, in his particular study, more males engaged in academically dishonest behavior than females, and business majors were more likely to cheat than liberal art or education majors. Baird's study seemed to confirm an increase in the prevalence of academic dishonesty among college students.

In their 1992 study, Greene and Saxe reported that academic dishonesty was occurring at a very high rate on college campuses. They surveyed 200 students and found that out of the 87 who responded to the study's survey, 99% reported that they believed others cheat and 81% self-reported engaging in academically dishonest behavior. Furthermore, the majority of the students polled viewed engaging in academic dishonesty as a normal behavior. This led the authors to hypothesize that high instances

of academic dishonesty may be linked to its acceptance as the norm among college students.

In 1995, Genereux and McLeod looked at 365 college students' behaviors in regards to academic dishonesty, and found that eighty-five percent of males and seventy-nine percent of females at an urban community college admitted to engaging in at least one form of academic dishonesty. This evidence corroborated the findings of prior studies, which support that the frequency of academic dishonesty has increased over time.

Davis and Ludvigson (1995) conducted research using a ten-minute questionnaire to find the frequency of academically dishonest behaviors among college students. Their study consisted of 71 sample classes containing anywhere from 19 to 53 students. Their results found that 70% of the students had admitted to cheating in high school, and of those students, 40% to 60% had engaged in one or more forms of academic dishonesty in college. This finding coincided with a study by McCabe and Bowers (1994), to be discussed later on in this chapter, which also found the frequency of academic dishonesty in college students to be between 40 and 60 percent.

The Center of Academic Integrity conducted 3 studies at medium size college campuses during three different years: 1990, 1992 and 1995 (Clayton, 1999). From a sample of 7,000 students, the Center found that approximately 80% of the students reported having engaged in at least one instance of academic dishonesty. Clayton also mentions a study conducted on *Who's Who Among America's High School Students*.

When surveyed, 80% of the 700,000 students on the “Who’s Who” list had admitted to engaging in academic dishonesty (Clayton, 1999; Morales, 2000).

An article by Morales (2000) mentions a news article reporting that up to 68% of college students reported having engaged in academic dishonesty. Morales points out that if the statistics put out by the Center for Academic Integrity are correct, then only 2 out of 10 high school students have refrained from the act of cheating in one form or another. Furthermore, Morales cites information from another study, which indicated that 88% of faculty members had reported observing students engaging in academically dishonest behaviors. These kinds of numbers lead a reader to believe that what is going on here is a cycle of cheating in which the cheater cheats, doesn’t get caught, and cheats again. This most likely leads other students to cheat as well, especially when they know that the chances of disciplinary action being taken by a faculty member are minimal.

A study by Groark, et al. (2001) discusses events around the country that have led people to become deeply concerned regarding the issue of academic dishonesty. At the University of Virginia, 122 students were accused of academic dishonesty; half of them may face expulsion. The University of California-Berkeley reported that the occurrences of academic dishonesty on its campus had doubled between 1995 and 1999. Clayton’s 1999 study states that the University of Texas has at least 180 cases of academic dishonesty come up every year, and is trying to boost integrity by distributing handbooks on plagiarism and conducting skits on the subject during orientation. In addition, at the University of Southern California in the academic year of 1997-1998, 152 cases of

academic dishonesty were reported (Clayton, 1999). Among these included acts of homework copying, collusion, plagiarism and fabrication.

### ***Graduate Students and Academic Dishonesty***

Although most of the research regarding academic dishonesty focuses on high school students and undergraduate level college students, some research has been conducted on the prevalence of academic dishonesty among graduate level students. In a study by Greene and Saxe (1992) 77% of the undergraduate students who had admitted to cheating also reported that they planned on attending graduate school. This poses the question: Will these students continue their academic dishonesty into the graduate school setting and could it become more of a behavior problem as the work becomes more demanding?

In 1995, Brown polled 207 graduate level business students to investigate the prevalence of academic dishonesty. The survey they were given measured 15 different academically dishonest behaviors including collusion, plagiarism and using crib notes. Brown discovered that 80% of the students had engaged in at least one of the behaviors listed on the survey, and that more than 20% had engaged in at least 5 of the different behaviors. Furthermore, the author concluded that graduate level students chance of engaging in academic dishonesty was similar to that of an undergraduate student. This finding is of particular interest considering that the study also showed that graduate students viewed themselves as more ethical than their undergraduate counterparts.

### **Research Opposing an Increase in Academic Dishonesty**

Not all research supports the idea that academic dishonesty has increased or become more of a problem. Many argue that the higher prevalence may be due to the fact that more students feel more comfortable admitting that they have cheated or plagiarized. Other studies argue that the manner in which the studies approach the question makes it appear that academic dishonesty is increasing.

In 1994 McCabe and Bowers reviewed their own studies from 1963 and 1991 (respectively) to evaluate whether or not academic dishonesty was truly increasing among college students. Both studies looked at male students attending small to medium size schools that were considered “Very Competitive Plus” by a college review book. The researchers looked first at Bowers’ 1964 study, which is reviewed earlier in this chapter, and compared it with findings from McCabe’s similar 1991 study. What they found was that roughly the same amount of students self-reported cheating when looking at similar criteria. In other words, if the same variables of academic dishonesty are looked at whether in 1964 or 1991, the percentages of students engaging in them are within just a few points of each other, suggesting that the frequency of academic dishonesty has not increased in recent years.

Some researchers feel that the variables themselves are causing academic dishonesty to look more prevalent today than it did in the past. Spiller and Crown (1995) argued that two particular cheating behaviors were being measured more than others: failing of students to reports grade errors on tests, and changing answers on self-graded



tests. The authors looked at 24 studies and used the two previously mentioned variables to determine whether or not academic dishonesty had increased. When looking at only the two variables of failing to report grade errors and changing answers on self-graded tests, the authors reported that the behavior frequency had been fairly stable rather than drastically increasing. They felt that although their study does not prove that the frequency rate of academic dishonesty is stable, there is not sufficient evidence to make the case for the frequency increase in academic dishonesty. The authors concluded that caution should be taken in the research being conducted regarding the increase in academic dishonesty.

McCabe and Trevino's article in 1996 summarizes many of the findings of previous studies conducted in regards to academic dishonesty. They concluded that although academic dishonesty appears to have increased somewhat, it has only done so at a modest rate rather than drastically as the media has reported.

In 2003, Brown and Emmett carried out an investigation that looked at several studies conducted over the years to determine if academic dishonesty was increasing. The authors looked at four different factors including year of publication, number of dishonest academic practices counted in each study, sample size of each study, and whether the study was a survey or observational. After taking all the variables into consideration, the authors found that overall, academic dishonesty had not increased over time. This coincided with the findings of the 1995 Spiller and Crown research.

Whether or not academic dishonesty is increasing on college campuses, it is occurring at a rate perceived by many to be unacceptably high. The findings from previous studies allow us to pose the following questions: Do students recognize cheating and plagiarism for the serious infraction that it is? Do they realize what they are doing may get them expelled? Do they feel justified because it has become socially acceptable? The next section of the literature review will address the perceptions of students and faculty regarding academic dishonesty, and whether they feel it is affecting the university system.

### ***Research on the Perceptions of Academic Dishonesty: Students and Faculty***

When considering the frequency of academic dishonesty or evaluating ways to prevent it, it is useful to examine how it is perceived. The way a university system, its' students, professors and faculty, view academic dishonesty may have a great deal to do with how often it occurs and how it can be prevented. The first thing to look at is what behaviors constitute academic dishonesty in the eyes of students. In a study by Greene and Saxe (1992) students perceived cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty to be normal behavior for students. Though it might seem normal to find academic dishonesty among college students, what behaviors do they find to be unacceptable forms of academic dishonesty and what behaviors do they find justifiable? These questions shed light on why academic dishonesty might continue at high rate if students feel them to be acceptable. The problem is that it might not be as clear-cut as thinking something wrong or right, and then following through with the appropriate behavior.

When Davis, Grover, Becker and McGregor (1992) conducted a survey with the question “Is it wrong to cheat”, the percentage of students answering yes was around 90%. This shows that students have a clear picture in their head that cheating is a behavior that morally and socially is not acceptable. However, when the authors of the study looked at the evidence of the actual frequency of cheating, they found a contrast. Although 90% of the students claimed to think academic dishonesty was wrong, 76% reported engaging in academically dishonest behaviors in high school and/or college. If 90% of students feel that engaging in academic dishonesty is wrong, why are the rates of occurrences so high?

Franklin-Stokes (1995) found six types of behaviors that students perceived to be the most serious including (in order of seriousness); taking an exam for another student, taking answers or unauthorized information into an exam, gaining answers to a test before taking it, copying another student’s assignment without their knowledge, copying another student’s test during an exam without their knowledge, and collusion during an examination.

Many studies show that students perceive plagiarism to be another clear-cut form of academic dishonesty. However, when Roig (1997) tried to determine whether or not students had the ability to perceive if a sample of writing had been plagiarized or correctly cited, he found that over 50% of the students that he used in his sample had misjudged the writing to be correctly paraphrased when it had been plagiarized. He found ultimately that students’ perceptions tended to be confused on the subject of

plagiarism and how to correctly paraphrase. These studies indicate the importance of the education system in deterring students from academic dishonesty through education and expectations. Because the students in the Roig study showed an inability to correctly identify a plagiarized document, there is indication that they may be at risk for plagiarizing themselves.

In 1998, Love and Simmons looked at graduate students' understanding of what it means to engage in academic dishonesty. In a qualitative study, they gave intensive interviews to six first-year graduate students, which included discussing and ranking academically dishonest behaviors. They based the items on their list using the Academic Misconduct Survey (Ferrell & Ferguson, 1993). They found that graduate students' understanding of what it means to engage in academic dishonesty was limited. Although students seem to have an understanding of cheating and plagiarism as being unacceptable, there are other behaviors they either do not realize are academically dishonest, or do not perceive to be serious offenses (Love & Simmons, 1998; McCabe & Trevino, 1996). Some of these behaviors included submitting the same paper in more than one class or collaborating with another student on an assignment. This information led the authors to conclude that many graduate level students may engage in academic dishonesty without realizing it.

In a university in the southern United States, information was collected from 41 graduate level college students: half of which were enrolled in a master's program and half were doctoral students (Ferrell and Ferguson, 1993). Using a self-

report survey, the authors were able to measure the graduate students' academically dishonest behaviors using the Academic Misconduct Survey (AMS) developed by Charlotte M. Ferrell (1992). The behaviors included cheating on tests, illegal use of resources, quasi-misconduct (behaviors considered less deviant), subtle manipulation (trying to influence the professor), and bold manipulation (more aggressive behavior). One of the important findings the authors made was that those students who perceive academic dishonesty to be a normal or accepted behavior had more of a propensity to engage in such behaviors. The authors concluded that although they found academic dishonesty to be prevalent, they did not feel it was a significant problem.

When incidences of academic dishonesty do take place, how does a school's staff perceive those students who engage in them? In their study to examine students' and faculty's attitudes toward academic dishonesty, Graham, Monday, O'Brien and Steffen (1994) surveyed a population from both a private and a community college to make comparisons. First, they found that faculty tends to rank certain academically dishonest behaviors as more serious than students did. For example, while 100% of faculty perceived writing a paper for another student to constitute cheating, only 93.6% of the students perceived it to be cheating. In regards to levels of severity, faculty tended to rate academically dishonest behaviors as more severe than did the students. On the same variable, writing a paper for another student, faculty perceived it to be 3.64 on the severity scale (1 being the least severe; 4 being the most severe) while students gave it a 2.91. This information indicates that although faculty does not support academically

dishonest behavior, they often ignore it (Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, Whitley, Jr. & Washburn, 1998). It would seem that for universities to have a chance to reduce the prevalence of academic dishonesty, faculty and staff have to take an active role. One author is quite candid on the subject. As Robert Lee Mahon, an English professor, states in his 2002 article, “(I) bought my first wife’s wedding ring with the ill-gotten gains from my own little cottage industry of writing for hire”(pg. 4). He goes on to mention that the students for whom he was writing all attended a Jesuit college. Normally, this would be a place that would be affiliated with high moral standards and little dishonesty of any kind. Right? Mahon believes that the way academic dishonesty can be prevented has a lot to do with the way it is perceived. Perceiving it to be the crime that it is, and having zero tolerance for the act is an important step to getting rid of the behavior. He broaches the subject at the beginning of class and has a section in his syllabus telling students that if he catches them plagiarizing, they will receive an automatic “F” in his class.

### ***Research on the Causes of Academic Dishonesty***

There are many reasons for engaging in academically dishonest behavior. A number of studies have identified some of the reasons why students choose to engage in academic dishonesty. Some students feel pressure to get better grades, and some students struggle academically and feel that cheating is their only path to any kind of success. Some students feel that engaging in academically dishonest behaviors is not a serious offense, and others do not realize that they have broken any rules. Also important is the fact that with current technology, engaging in academically dishonest behavior has never

been easier. In addition, although the frequency rate of self-reported academic dishonesty may be as high as 89% (Baird, 1980), university and college faculties often ignore the behaviors (Keith-Spiegel et al, 1998). And as if that were not enough, according to Clayton (1999), 66% of students' parents felt that engaging in academic dishonesty is not a serious problem. Some studies address the differences within student populations that might cause more academically dishonest behaviors such as gender, a student's major, or if the student attends a large or small university (Baird, 1980; McCabe & Trevino, 1996; Beadle, n.d.). This section will attempt to address what has been researched in the area of cause and what might be perpetuating academic dishonesty.

In 1941, after finding that 23% of the students he studied had engaged in academically dishonest behavior, Drake came to several conclusions on what might be the cause. First, he found that none of the students who had cheated in his study were in the top 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of their class, and half of them were in the bottom 25<sup>th</sup> percentile. From this evidence he concluded that less intelligent students appear to cheat more than more intelligent students. He also felt that because the students with lower academic skills cheated the most, they did so because of a need to get higher grades. Drake also found that students who were fraternity members were more likely to cheat than their non-member counterparts. He attributed this to the fact that fraternity members have higher expectations to get good grades and more pressure is placed on them from their organization.

When Davis, et al. (1992), found that 90% of students considered cheating to be wrong, yet 76% of these same students reported having cheated at least once in high school or college, they were forced to ask for a reason. What they found is that although student reports indicate high rates regarding academic dishonesty, detection by teachers and professors was as low as 1.3%. This seems to suggest that not getting caught could be reinforcement for students when deciding to engage in academic dishonesty. When polling these students on “why” they choose to be dishonest, many reasons came up. Some students reported that they were helping a friend; some did not feel that it was wrong, and some felt pressure from their peers to cheat. Others felt a great amount of pressure to succeed in an academic setting to ensure employment after the university.

One of the more obvious reasons a student might be inclined to engage in academically dishonest behavior is for better grades. Students seem to be willing to do anything to get the grades they want and to get through school. In a recent article, Moeck (2002) stated, “With tremendous pressure and competition for grades, some (students) will cheat or plagiarize to maintain a high GPA, which can please parents, result in selection to school leadership roles, and impress corporate recruiters” (pg. 484). According to Shropshire (1997), students cheat because their cost benefit analysis shows that cheating pays; the ability to succeed is held above all else, and if students have to cheat to get into the right graduate school or get the right job, they will often do it. Shropshire’s conclusions support the notion that there is evidence of positive reinforcement for cheating when not caught.



According to a study by Roig (1999), the frequency of academic dishonesty was dependent upon the task that students were asked to perform. His research included two studies involving a sample of approximately 200 undergraduate students from two private colleges in New York City. In the first study, the students were given a two sentence paragraph that they were to format for use in a paper, without using direct quotes and without plagiarizing. In this sample, Roig found that 46% of the students plagiarized while rewriting the passage and that 52% distorted the information. In the second part of the study, Roig used what he considered to be a “more readable text”, and found that the instances of plagiarism were lowered. However, there were still numerous distortions of the information, similar to what he found in the first part of the study. Roig concluded that incidences of plagiarism by students might often be due to lack of knowledge on what constitutes plagiarism, and how to correctly paraphrase.

Some of the other factors that have been researched to find a cause of academic dishonesty have to do with the characteristics of the students themselves. The first factor is gender, and several studies have shown that academically dishonest behaviors seem more prevalent in male students than female students. According to Baird (1980) and Davis et al. (1992) males admit to more cheating than do females. Women may have been socialized to obey rules and resist unacceptable behaviors more than man, therefore, abstaining from engaging in academically dishonest behaviors where their male counterparts may not (Hendershott, Drinan, & Cross, 1999).

Where the student attends school and their field of study can also have an affect on whether or not they might engage in academic dishonesty. It is thought that larger universities, due to the climate and less teacher/student contact, have more prevalence of academic dishonesty among their student populations (McCabe & Pavela, 2000). Other studies have shown that depending on the students' field of study they might be more or less likely to engage in academically dishonest behaviors. For example, in Baird's 1980 study, business majors were more likely to engage in inappropriate behaviors in regards to academic dishonesty. That finding is corroborated by Brown (1995) who also found high rates of academic dishonesty among graduate level business students when comparing them to undergraduates.

If nothing else is certain in regards to academic dishonesty, the fact that it is not a clear-cut issue and not black and white is very evident. The causes of academic dishonesty are as numerous as the different ways students have found to cheat on their homework. One of the newer causes of academic dishonesty has to do with the plethora of information that can be gathered with the click of a button on the Internet.

### **Research Regarding Academic Dishonesty and the World Wide Web**

Evidence supports many different reasons for why such a high number of students seem to engage in academic dishonesty, including ignorance on what constitutes academic dishonesty. The Internet has also been under scrutiny in regards to the perpetuation of academic dishonesty, as many students feel that the public domain of the World Wide Web equals free for all. According to Groark, et al., (2001) the website

www.cheater.com has 72,000 members and grows by several hundred every day, while the Evil House of Cheat (www.cheathouse.com) reports 4,000 visitors a day, and the School Sucks website (www.schoolsucks.com) receives 10,000 visits every day. Upon visiting these sites, the researcher found them all to be very easy to access with many choices in regards to finding papers. The School Sucks website has an icon that says “Download Your Workload Here” (Clayton, 1999), and when hit, takes the reader to a page where they can either sign up to unlimited access to the thousands of papers they have, or visit one of their chat rooms to exchange homework assignments with other students all over the world. Students can apply for a scholarship if they can prove that they are less than an “A” average student. The Evil House of Cheat (www.cheathouse.com) boasts of “thousands of essays in over 130 categories,” “leading the industry since 1995,” and “over 5.5 million served.” At the website Cheater.com, all an individual has to do is type in the subject of the paper and wait for hundreds to thousands of results to come up next to an icon of a Visa/Mastercard logo. Although the availability of these sites does not mean that every student visiting them is purchasing a paper, they are definitely set up for students who might consider engaging in academic dishonesty. Groark et al. (2001) went on to say that with the easy access and availability of what have been dubbed “paper mills,” academic dishonesty is likely to become even more of a problem than it already seems to be. Morales (2000) hypothesizes that in our increasingly technologically dependent and depersonalized world, people have become

too preoccupied and short sighted to hand down the fundamental values of honesty and self-accountability.

### ***Dishonesty and the Workplace***

Regardless of the inconsistency of the numerous studies conducted throughout the years, or whether or not academic dishonesty has truly increased over the years, the fact remains that it exists and it is a problem that needs to be addressed. Those students, undergraduate and graduate alike, are the people who will be responsible for civil society and the economy. They will be the people who serve our food, clean our buildings, vaccinate our children, provide us with prescription drugs, and report our news. The problem of dishonesty in the academic system is that it could very easily generalize over into the work setting. Will a person who has felt comfortable cheating at the college level continue to do so when they are employed? Academic dishonesty leading to workplace dishonesty has the ability to do harm to members of the society who count on its workers to be productive and honest.

In 1993, Sims looked at the relationship between academic dishonesty and likelihood of it having an affect on dishonesty in the workplace. Sixty students were surveyed, and of the respondents 91% had admitted to academic dishonesty and 98% had admitted to dishonest work behaviors. This led Sims to conclude a positive relationship between the behaviors of academic and workplace dishonesty. This evidence was corroborated by Nonis and Swift (2001) who found that many students perceived academically dishonest behaviors to be acceptable. Furthermore, those students who

found those behaviors acceptable were more likely to engage in them. The authors concluded, “students who engaged in dishonest behavior in their college classes were more likely to engage in dishonest behavior on the job” (pg. 76). This evidence points out that academic dishonesty can be generalized to the workplace, and gives people more reason than ever to find out what to do about it.

A recent Gallup Poll says that 77 percent of Americans rate the situation in regards to moral values in the United States today as "poor" or "only fair," while only 22 percent respond with "good" or "excellent" (Ostling, 2003). That is a disheartening figure, but not a surprising one considering the amount of fraud and dishonesty the public has seen go unchecked in the last several years. The Enron scandal erupted in October of 2001([www.montanaforum.com](http://www.montanaforum.com)), and the public has yet to see formal charges be brought upon some of the main players in a scandal that cost thousands of people their jobs and life savings. WorldCom is another example of a corporation running on greed and lies, which ended with the largest bankruptcy in history ([www.cbsnews.com](http://www.cbsnews.com)). What kinds of examples are these corporations setting for the youth of the world? Their philosophy seems to say that money comes before everything: even before morals and values. This sort of behavior may encourage dishonesty in people entering the working world if they feel that they must do whatever it is that they have to do to achieve success; including dishonest behavior.

Several months ago, New York Times reporter Jayson Blair was found to have plagiarized and fabricated his way to the front page of the New York Times. A young

journalist in the fast-paced, extremely competitive world of reporting, Blair submitted and published off-site articles that he supposedly reported on from other states, to the Times without ever leaving New York City. The fact that he never handed in expense reports with hotel or airline information should have alarmed his superiors, but he continued to fabricate his stories. According to [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com), 36 of 73 articles that he had written since transferring to the national desk in October of 2002 have been found to have discrepancies. Five weeks after the scandal broke, Blair's supervisors, executive editor Howell Raines and managing editor Gerald Boyd both resigned from the Times. James Carey of the Nation (2003) noted "Telling the youngest kid in town to sink or swim clearly taught that the institution values aggressiveness and star quality rather than the mundane virtues of truth and proportion" (pg. 23).

Another example of dishonesty in the workplace is the recent scandal with the pharmaceutical company Pan Pharmaceuticals Limited. Pan Pharmaceuticals Limited manufactures hundreds of different pharmaceutical medications, vitamins, minerals and homeopathic medicines ([www.panlabs.com.au](http://www.panlabs.com.au)). According to the website [www.theage.com](http://www.theage.com), the Sidney, Australia based company was responsible for substituting ingredients and manipulating test results of the drug "Travacalm", and then marketing it to consumers. According to the Australian Department of Health and Aging ([www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)), 19 people were hospitalized after using the drug, and 68 others experienced "life threatening adverse reactions to this over-the-counter medicine" which is used to alleviate the symptoms of nausea or dizziness related to traveling sickness.

This may have been due to the fact that the active ingredient in the pills was found to vary from nothing to seven times the appropriate dose. Some of the reactions that people suffered included blurred vision, agitation and loss of balance. The company subsequently had their license suspended by the watchdog group Therapeutic Goods Administration ([www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)).

These examples of workplace dishonesty make the argument that as a society, we are faced with problems of integrity in both the academic and work setting. One should be taken as seriously as the other. The more socially acceptable these behaviors become, the more likely it is that they will become more frequent. Action needs to be taken not only to justly punish those who have engaged in the aforementioned behaviors, academic and workplace alike, but to prevent and dissuade people from engaging in such behaviors.

### **Research on Prevention of Academic Dishonesty**

According to Love and Simmons (1998), there are internal and external (environmental) factors that facilitate the prevention of academic dishonesty. The seven internal factors that result in the avoidance of academic dishonesty, and of which the student has some control, include personal confidence, positive professional ethics, fairness to the authors of the utilized source, desire to work and learn, fairness to others, and fear or guilt. The external factors, or factors over which the student has little control, include professors' knowledge of subject matter, the probability of being caught, time pressure, the perception of cheating as dangerous, the type of work required and the need

for future knowledge. The external factors, especially, promote the involvement of the educational institution itself taking responsibility for working with students to alleviate the problem and lessen the frequency of academic dishonesty. Other contributing factors that the authors mentioned were the students' personal attitudes, lack of awareness and lack of competency. Also, pressure situations such as grades, time and task pressures were seen as contributing to the higher frequencies of academic dishonesty. By knowing these factors and what might be fueling students to engage in academically dishonest behaviors, universities can be better prepared to deal with and prevent it.

Although reports of academic dishonesty seem to be very high, if not higher than ever before, many experienced researchers have optimistic views on what can alleviate the problem. According to Jackson, et al. (2002), the university system is responsible along with the individual, and must play a role in deterring students from academically dishonest behavior. Their study found that departments that are more lenient with students in regards to academic integrity have greater instances of academic dishonesty. In other words, when the students do not face consequences for their actions, there tends to be a higher prevalence of the unwanted behaviors. Many researchers (McCabe & Pavela, 2000; Davis et. al., 1992) promote the use of "Honor Codes" at colleges and universities, and claim that the schools that have implemented them have lower frequencies of academic dishonesty. According to McCabe and Pavela (2000), there was as much as a 17% difference between schools with and without honor codes. McCabe and Pavela's study involved 4000 students on 31 campuses. According to their report,



54% of students at honor code universities admitted to cheating, while 71% of students at non-honor code universities admitted to cheating.

The Center for Academic Integrity, which is affiliated with Duke University, was started in 1992 by researchers, Donald McCabe, Sally Cole and Gary Pavela, interested in the subject of academic dishonesty. According to their mission statement, The Center for Academic Integrity “provides a forum to identify and affirm the values of academic integrity and to promote their achievement in practice” ([www.academicintegrity.org](http://www.academicintegrity.org)). At the time of Clayton’s study (1999), the Center for Academic Integrity was working with 175 schools to alleviate the dilemma of academic dishonesty. Currently, the Center for Academic Integrity is working with over 320 institutions to promote academic honesty. The goal of the organization is to help universities promote academic integrity by setting up honor code systems that the students can follow and be held accountable for. Allowing students to hold a role in the process can help to create that sense of responsibility, which can deter students from engaging in academically dishonest behaviors.

Other ways universities can prevent academic dishonesty in their student bodies is to promote education on what constitutes academic dishonesty. Many students, as previous studies have shown, are not necessarily aware of what it means to engage in academically dishonest behavior. Others know the behaviors all too well, but think that the risk of getting a better grade outweighs the slim chance of getting caught. Reviewing the university’s handbook and policies regarding academic dishonesty during orientation

or in various classes is one way to get the ball rolling toward integrity among students. In a recent class, the author of this literature review was asked to write a research paper regarding a form of academic dishonesty. It was a very helpful and efficient way to learn about what constitutes plagiarism, the chosen topic of the research paper, and what the university's policies are regarding plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty.

### ***University of Wisconsin-Stout's Policies and Procedures***

At the University of Wisconsin-Stout, according to the university handbook, academic dishonesty is not acceptable ([www.uwstout.edu](http://www.uwstout.edu)). Academic dishonesty is defined so students can be clear on what is expected of them. The University of Wisconsin-Stout defines academic dishonesty as cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, facilitating academic dishonesty, and forgery of academic documents or damaging the academic work of others. The University of Wisconsin-Stout policy on academic dishonesty contains disciplinary and due process procedures that the student may follow after accusations of academic dishonesty. Instructors and students have the opportunity to meet together to find a course of action if the offense is viewed as minor. Possible outcomes could include an oral reprimand, a written reprimand presented to the student alone, and assignment to repeat the work, a lowered grade on the assignment or a lowered grade for the course. Depending upon the seriousness of the offense, the student may also face being given a failing grade in the course, being removed from the course, receiving a written reprimand in their file, disciplinary probation, suspension or expulsion. If the student has been accused of a more serious offense, he or she has the

opportunity to seek counsel and fair hearing, and has ten days to do so. If the case does not end in the student's favor, the student has 10 days to appeal to the Chancellor. If the Chancellor's decision does not favor the student, he or she has another ten days to appeal to the Board of Regents. Both the University of Wisconsin-Stout policy and system of due process is an important step in the prevention and remediation of academic dishonesty. The University of Wisconsin Student Handbook is also helpful in explaining to students what is expected of them, but there are issues in regards to accessing the information. When looking up information for a legal and ethical issues course, this researcher found the University of Wisconsin-Stout handbook difficult to find online. Other students in the same course also had difficulties with the online version of the handbook while looking up information on academic dishonesty. Having readily available information regarding rules and policies is an important step in the prevention of academic dishonesty. Students have the right to know what is expected of them, and what will happen if they choose not to follow the rules that have been established. The University of Wisconsin-Stout may want to consider implementing an honor-code that students can easily obtain and discuss in every class. At the very least, the University of Wisconsin-Stout should consider emphasizing the current policy through education of its' students and availability of the policies in academic dishonesty. The more that accessible information is made available on the subject of academic dishonesty, the more likely students are to know what they should and should not do, and act accordingly.

### *Conclusion*

Though much research has been conducted on all aspects of academic dishonesty, not all questions regarding the topic have been answered. Though there have been studies conducted on the topic of graduate students and academic dishonesty (Clayton, 1999; Morales, 2000; Groark, et al., 2001), there seems to be a lack of research regarding graduate level students and their perceptions and frequency rates of academic dishonesty. To be able to address the problem of academic dishonesty in universities in general, we need to find out more regarding the perceptions and causes of such behaviors. The study of graduate students and their perceptions and frequency rates are important for many reasons. They are at a higher level of education and more is expected of them and will be expected of them in the jobs they take. Since research points to the fact that academic dishonesty often leads to workplace dishonesty, more information needs to be obtained regarding academically dishonest behaviors; particularly with graduate students. Also, for University of Wisconsin-Stout to be able to educate and enforce the rules regarding academic dishonesty, it would be helpful to have information from the students themselves on the topic. This research will be significant in that it may shed some light on the way academic dishonesty is perceived and engaged in by graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

This chapter will consider the implications of past research as it applies to the purpose and significance of the proposed study. The proposed study will examine the perceptions and frequency of academic dishonesty in graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. This chapter will outline the proposed methods to be used to carry out this study, including participant information and instrumentation. Finally, the significance of the proposed study, anticipated findings, and the possible limitations of the proposed study will be examined.

#### **Implications of the Current Literature for Future Research**

There have been numerous studies conducted on the subject of academic dishonesty, using both frequency rates and perceptions as variables. Much of the research indicates that frequency rates have been on the incline over the past several decades (Baird, 1980; Greene & Saxe, 1992; Genereux & McLeod, 1995; Davis & Ludvigson, 1995; Clayton, 1999; Morales, 2000). According to Davis, Grover, Becker and McGregor (1992), although the majority of students feel it is wrong to do so (90%), 76% of those students self-reported engaging in academically dishonest behavior. Other studies have focused on students' perceptions of academic dishonesty. Greene and Saxe (1992) found that students perceive academically dishonest behaviors to be normal behavior for students. Such behaviors include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and collusion. The majority of the available research on

academic dishonesty focuses on the behaviors of undergraduate students; very little research is available on the behaviors of graduate students. The purpose of this study will be to examine the perceptions and frequency of academic dishonesty among graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

Based on the preceding discussion, the following research questions are proposed:

- 1) How do graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout perceive academic dishonesty?
- 2) What is the percentage of full and part-time graduate students attending the University of Wisconsin-Stout who have engaged in academically dishonest behaviors in the past?
- 3) What is the percentage of full and part-time graduate students attending the University of Wisconsin-Stout who self-report that they are currently engaging in academically dishonest behaviors.
- 4) What types of academically dishonest behaviors do graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout engage in, and how frequently are they engaging in them?

### **Proposed Future Study**

#### ***Participants***

Participants in the proposed study will be graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout during the 2003-2004 academic year. The email addresses of all enrolled graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout will be obtained from the

University of Wisconsin-Stout Graduate School. After obtaining the list, all graduate students will receive email requests to participate in the study, thereby ensuring the largest pool of respondents possible, and increasing the possibility of obtaining statistically significant results.

### ***Survey Instrument***

The instrument of choice for this particular study will be an adaptation of surveys used in previous studies to poll students regarding academic dishonesty. The survey will attempt to measure University of Wisconsin-Stout graduate students' perceptions of academic dishonesty, querying whether, for example, if they feel it is acceptable or unacceptable, and why they themselves or other students might engage in academic dishonesty. The survey will then attempt to measure how often University of Wisconsin-Stout graduate students engaged in academic dishonesty in high school, undergraduate school, and in their current graduate level courses. Finally, demographic data, such as, age, gender, and year of graduate study, will be collected.

### ***Data Collection***

A letter introducing the researcher and the study will be emailed to all of the graduate students listed as enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. The survey will be accessed via a URL address listed at the end of the email letter, following a confidentiality statement. Since participants will be responding to the survey anonymously when they log on to the URL, complete confidentiality will be assured.

Data from completed surveys will be compiled and forwarded to the researcher, who will not have access to the names or email addresses of participants.

### ***Data Analysis***

Descriptive statistics will be used in analyzing the results of the data collected. These statistics include frequency counts, means, standard deviations, and percentages. Furthermore, correlations between students' perceptions of academic dishonesty compared to reported involvement in academically dishonest behavior will be explored.

### ***Significance of the Research***

The proposed study is significant because of limited availability of research on graduate level students and academic dishonesty. Much of the available research focuses on undergraduate students, however, in a study by Greene and Saxe (1992) 77% of the undergraduate students who had admitted to cheating also reported that they planned on attending graduate school. By examining this study's findings, officials at the University of Wisconsin-Stout will gain insight into how it's graduate students perceive academic dishonesty and how often they engage in academically dishonest behaviors. Using this information, the University of Wisconsin-Stout may be able to develop a protocol to address the intervention or prevention of academic dishonesty among graduate students.

### ***Anticipated Findings***

Based on the results of previous research on academic dishonesty, it is assumed that graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout will self-report a relatively high frequency rate for engaging in academically dishonest behavior. It is assumed that the



anticipated findings of students' perceptions of academic dishonesty will vary.

Furthermore, research has shown that many students are ignorant of what constitutes academic dishonesty. This study is likely to show that many of the graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout who have engaged in academically dishonest behaviors have done so unknowingly.

***Potential Limitations of the Proposed Study***

A possible limitation of this study is sample size, and the number of graduate students who respond to the survey. To ensure the highest level of response, time required to fill out the survey will be limited to ten minutes. Also, because the instrument being used will be modified from previous studies, reliability and validity may be a concern. Finally, over or under-reporting may be a problem and could possibly skew the results of the study. However, the anonymity of the participants who respond to the survey should address that issue.

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