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**AN EXAMINATION OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY IN SECONDARY
ONLINE ENGLISH EDUCATION**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in English Language Arts Education
in the College of Education
and in The Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
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Thesis Chair: Dr. Susan J. Wegmann

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ABSTRACT

Online schooling is the newest form of education and it is quickly gaining popularity. However, this educational format also comes with one of the challenges that has always been present in schools, which is academic dishonesty. In the English Language Arts content area, academic dishonesty is most often manifested as plagiarism, however, cheating on online quizzes or exams still exists. Although this issue has always been present in English classes, it is becoming more of a concern because of the vast number of technological resources available to students including websites with pre-written papers and the various methods students can now use to instantly communicate with each other.

This study combines and synthesizes a literature review and a survey of secondary online English educators at Florida Virtual School to give their perspective on aspects of cheating and plagiarism in online English education including a comparison between online and face to face academic dishonesty, reasons students cheat or plagiarize in online education and attitudes toward academic dishonesty, how students cheat and plagiarize in online classes, how teachers detect academic dishonesty in their online classes, consequences and policies of academic dishonesty in online education, and preventing academic dishonesty in online education. The overall new finding, from comparing both the literature review and the FLVS survey results, was that academic dishonesty in online education is not vastly different from academic dishonesty in face to face classrooms; therefore, academic dishonesty in the online environment is not as much of a mystery as commonly perceived. The survey did, however, expand the knowledge about

online academic dishonesty at the secondary level, and specifically in the English Language Arts content area.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background and Definition

Online education has gained popularity because it allows for “students [to] enjoy greater flexibility, less travel and the opportunity to obtain an education when geographic and/or physical limitations exist” (Lanier, 2006, p. 244). It has become an even more popular topic of discussion because the suspected amount of academic dishonesty taking place in virtual schools is becoming alarming. This concern is rooted in the moral and ethical belief that cheating is considered wrong and should not be tolerated. This study sought to perform research in order to gain knowledge on several aspects of academic dishonesty in order to help the effort to end the cheating epidemic and promote academic integrity, which will ensure that students are receiving the most valuable, credible, and trustworthy education. Virtual learning environments that maintain academic integrity are capable of producing well-rounded scholars and critical thinkers through the honest completion of assignments and engagement in comprehensive study (Hearrington, 2011).

Many definitions of academic dishonesty currently exist in the literature on the subject; however, for the purposes of this study, academic dishonesty is defined as providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for academic evaluation including papers, projects and examinations (cheating); and presenting, as one’s own, the ideas or words of another

person or persons for academic evaluation without proper acknowledgement (plagiarism). (Hard, Conway, & Moran, 2006, p. 1059)

Conversely, academic *integrity* is defined as “a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility,” and “from these values come principles of behavior that enable academic communities to translate ideals into action” (Duke University, 1999, p. 7).

Although cheating has always been present in schools, Rowe (2004) and Wang (2008) report that reduced face to face interaction in online classes adds to academic dishonesty in these courses, and Kennedy, Nowak, Raghuraman, Thomas, and Davis (2000) found that “both teachers and students believe it is easier to cheat in an online course, [so] more academic dishonesty is likely to occur” (para. 1). In fact, “the rate of cheating for online courses surpassed that of traditional lecture courses” (Lanier, 2006, p. 258). However, opposite results have also been found; Grijalva et al. (2006) reported that academic dishonesty was no different between online and traditional classes. Since the findings do not necessarily agree, no definite answer is possible as to where academic dishonesty is more prevalent.

Although there have been several studies conducted in order to obtain information about academic honesty in online courses, few are at the secondary—middle and high school—levels (Ma, Lu, Turner, & Wan, 2007). This study combines the existing literature about academic dishonesty in online education at various levels, with new findings on the subject at the secondary level, focusing particularly on the English Language Arts subject area; the new findings will come from a survey of secondary English Language Arts teachers at Florida Virtual

School. This report sheds light upon a number of questions about academic dishonesty in distance learning with chapters dedicated to topics including a comparison between online and face to face academic dishonesty, reasons students cheat or plagiarize in online education and attitudes toward academic dishonesty, how students cheat and plagiarize in online classes, how teachers detect academic dishonesty in their online classes, consequences and policies of academic dishonesty in online education, and preventing academic dishonesty in online education.

Florida Virtual School (FLVS)

Research for this study was conducted at Florida Virtual School (FLVS), which is “the undisputed pioneer in K–12 virtual learning” and is “charting new territory to bring any time, any place learning to students everywhere as part of a free public education” (<http://www.pearsonschool.com/>, Virtual Learning About Us sect.). Founded in 1997, FLVS began with the vision “to deliver a high quality, technology-based education that provides the skills and knowledge students need for success,” but is now viewed by many as one of the largest and most successful reforms of public schooling (www.flvs.net, Mission section). Currently utilized by students in 67 Florida districts, 49 states, and 57 countries, FLVS offers over 110 courses in academic subjects, languages, honors, and Advanced Placement with over 1400 staff members serving more than 122,000 enrolled students (www.flvs.net, Quick Facts section). As of now, FLVS serves elementary, middle, and high school level students.

FLVS is presently the “only public school with funding tied directly to student performance,” but it is based on the number of students who pass their online classes rather than on student enrollment like traditional public schools; it is free for Florida residents, and tuition-based for non-Florida residents (Hacsi, 2004; www.flvs.net, Quick Facts section). Students, Florida residents especially, take advantage of the freedom that FLVS offers in order to “fulfill graduation requirements, make up credits for missed or failed classes, or take Advanced Placement (AP) and other courses that are not available at their physical school” (Tucker, 2009, p. 14). Another part of the attraction to FLVS is that students do not have to follow the quarter- or semester-based schedule that brick and mortar schools require; students have the ability to move through their virtual school classes at whichever pace they would like (Tucker, 2009).

FLVS has received countless awards since 1999. Some of the most recent awards received in 2011 include the Outstanding Individual Contribution to K-12 Online Learning Award given to Julie Young, president and CEO of Florida Virtual School in Orlando, and the Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education Award (www.flvs.net, Awards section). FLVS was also named one of the country's Top 50 Innovators, and Champion at the 6th Annual Sterling Conference Storyboard Competition (www.flvs.net, Awards section). The most impressive distinction, however, is that “FLVS students consistently earned higher grades, received better state assessment scores, and achieved higher marks on AP exams than students in traditional schools” (Young, Birtolo, & McElman, 2009, p. 16).

Part of FLVS’s success can be credited to its efforts in preventing academic dishonesty. FLVS ensures that students are knowledgeable about maintaining academic integrity, keep

records of all instances of cheating or plagiarism, and having a clear matrix outlining the consequences students will face if they do not submit original work. The FLVS honor code is entitled “Academic Integrity: The FLVS Non-Negotiable,” and it emphasizes that “academic integrity is the cornerstone of learning at Florida Virtual School” (Florida Virtual School [FLVS], p. 2). This document details academic integrity separately for both students and parents. Students are made aware of the definition of academic integrity, why academic integrity is important, the difference between plagiarism and cheating, what a ‘student broker’ is, and they are given an introduction to the consequences that students may be subject to if they chose to cheat or plagiarize (FLVS). Parents are provided with explanations of tools that are used to “ensure the integrity of student work” such as Turnitin.com, the FLVS Academic Integrity Database, teacher expertise, discussion-based assessments, proctored exams, and the FLVS Academic Integrity Hotline/Email (FLVS, p. 2). FLVS holds students, parents, faculty, and staff to specific high standards of academic integrity.

Status of Academic Integrity in Online Education

Although Florida Virtual School is the outstanding example of online education, previous research at the collegiate level has indicated that educators involved with distance education perceive that online courses present more opportunities for, and encourage a greater amount academic dishonesty than traditional classes (Kennedy et al., 2000; Baron & Crooks, 2005). The

literature on this topic, not specific to one subject area in particular, provides many startling statistics that indicate that despite awareness on the issue and efforts made to end academic dishonesty, a significant amount still occurs in virtual education; this amount is referred to by Lambert and Hogan (2004) as an “epidemic across most college campuses” (p. 1). With the new technology and resources at students’ fingertips, new forms and methods of cheating and plagiarizing have emerged such as “collaborative cheating” (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2001, p. 221) and “other more explicit forms of cheating” (Spaulding, 2011, p. 2718). Two popular reasons are that even the high achieving students think that “cheating is commonplace... more than half do not consider cheating a serious transgression” (Duke University, 1999, p. 5), and that “both students and faculty believe it is easier to cheat with distance learning classes” (Lanier, 2006, p. 245). This information also gives an indication of just how much of a paradigm shift needs to take place in order to correct this problem.

A number of variables have contributed to this issue. First, both students and college professors believe that cheating is much less of a challenge in a web-based course (Kennedy et al., 2000). University professors (64%) and university students (57%) perceive that “it would be easier to cheat in the electronic classes,” although this does not necessarily indicate that the same percentages of students actually are cheating (Kennedy et al., 2000, Student Responses section). The lack of effort necessary to cheat or plagiarize in an online class is largely due to the technology and resources that students have access to that are not typically available in a face to face class. The technology and resources can be anything from cell phones, computers, and tablets, to websites, software, personal notes, and peers; “the Educational Testing Service notes

that one website providing free term papers to students has averaged 80,000 hits per day" (Duke University, 1999, p. 5). Since the technology and the resources are most definitely here to stay and will continue to advance, "online plagiarism is likely to become even more prevalent as the supply and accessibility of digital data continue to grow" (Sterngold, 2004, p. 18). Some evidence for this comes from a Rutgers University professor who discovered that the amount of students who had plagiarized from websites was increasing: "41 percent of students said they engaged in "cut and paste" plagiarism compared to just 10 percent of the students McCabe surveyed three years earlier" (Sterngold, 2004, p. 18).

A small amount of literature at the secondary level in the face to face format, illustrates the current status of academic integrity (Ma, Wan, & Lu, 2008; Stricherz, 2001). One study conducted by the Josephson Institute of Ethics (2006) found that out of 36,000 high school students that were surveyed, "about 33% had copied an Internet document within the past 12 months; [and] 18% did so two or more times ...in addition, 60% cheated during a test at school within the past 12 months; [and] 35% did so two or more times" (Ma et al., 2008, p. 198). Results like this indicate the "entrenched habits of dishonesty in the young people" (Ma et al., 2008, p. 198). Furthermore, the following statistics show that teachers may be part of the problem. Stricherz (2001) reported that 47% of 4,500 high school students surveyed across the U.S. "believed teachers sometimes elect not to confront students they know are cheating" (para. 3). Similarly, 26% of these students "believed teachers simply don't want to be bothered by reporting suspected academic dishonesty" (Stricherz, 2001, para. 3). Findings from the same survey also identified the Internet as one main resource for plagiarism; 54% of these students

admitted to plagiarizing written work they found on the Internet (Stricherz, 2001). These findings also extend to the undergraduate level; the Center for Academic Integrity (2005) conducted a survey of 50,000 students in 60 universities across the U.S. which provided that more than 50% of the students admitted to plagiarizing written work found on the Internet. The same survey also revealed that even more of the students (70%) stated that they knew that their peers used the copy and paste method to complete their homework (Center for Academic Integrity, 2005).

Methodology

Each thesis chapter is written on one aspect of academic integrity and includes information gathered from a literature review that is supplemented by data and analysis from an original survey of Florida Virtual School English teachers [See Appendix A]. The literature review portion of each chapter analyzes and discusses research that has already been conducted on the subject of academic dishonesty including both web-based and traditional education, and at secondary and collegiate levels in multiple subject areas; this literature provides information on subtopics that apply to secondary level English courses.

The link to an online-based survey was distributed in an email to all 145 of the secondary English teachers currently employed at Florida Virtual School. After the initial distribution of the survey, two reminder emails containing the survey link were sent to Florida Virtual School English teachers. At the end of the survey completion period, a total of 27 surveys were

received, which is about 18.6% of the 145 teachers that the survey was distributed to. When the results were received, the responses to each question were compiled and included in the survey results portion of each chapter.

The survey portion of this study is unique in the sense that it addresses the secondary level rather than the commonly analyzed collegiate level, and it will examine the perspective of the teachers rather than students. A survey of teachers in the online setting provides valuable information through first-hand, professional experience that is connected to the issue. Surveying teachers, rather than students is a way to ensure honest answers, since students may not admit their own academic dishonesty. The Florida Virtual School was chosen as a result of its highly regarded status in online education for its “distinct educational philosophy, approach, and culture... [and] highly personalized instruction” (Tucker, 2009, para. 3, 6).

This survey is limited in a few ways: (1) by only being distributed to one existing virtual school, (2) the study was limited to the English/Language Arts subject area, and (3) the study only sought to survey and explore the teachers’ perspectives in regard to academic dishonesty. Therefore, the results of this survey can only be applied to the thoughts and opinions of a sampling of FLVS online English subject area teachers and are not representative of all instructors’ views on the issue of academic integrity in online education.

Florida Virtual School Survey Results

Two items on the survey were used to obtain background information. Survey item 2, “What course(s) and grade level(s) do you teach? How long have you been teaching this/these course(s) and grade level(s)?” was answered by all 27 respondents and yielded a variety of results. The amount of teaching experience ranged from a few weeks to 40 years; in many cases this included both virtual school and traditional school experiences, with almost all originally starting in a face to face classroom then moving to virtual school. The levels taught ranged from 6th through 12th grade, and included a variety of different types of English courses, many of which are taught simultaneously by the same teacher. These courses included (6) English I, (5) English II, (3) English III, (1) English III Honors, (3) English IV, (3) Language Arts, (2) Advanced Placement Literature and Composition, (4) Journalism, (1) Reading, (1) Creative Writing, (1) Special Education English, and (2) other unspecified English courses.

In survey item 9, the FLVS teachers were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, how often their students cheat or plagiarize. The highest percentage (42%) corresponded with a rating of 4: “Somewhat often” which was selected by 11 teachers, and was followed by 2: “Rarely” with 7 selections (27%). Next was 3: “Neutral,” with 6 selections (23%), and finally 5: “Very often,” was selected twice (8%). The results of survey item 9 are consistent with the current status of academic dishonesty in online education as portrayed in the review of literature. First, the highest percentage (42%) falls in between the 33% of students who had copied an internet document and the 60% who cheated during a test in the Josephson Institute of Ethics survey

(2006). And secondly, the findings are consistent with Sterngold's (2004) finding that 41% of students admitted to cut and paste plagiarism.

This information set the stage for the remainder of the study; Chapter 2 will compare and contrast academic dishonesty between the traditional and online educational setting.

CHAPTER 2: ACADEMIC DISHONESTY ONLINE VS. FACE TO FACE

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the elements and factors of academic integrity in the online and traditional setting in order to determine any similarities or differences that may exist. Oftentimes, the information that is known about cheating and plagiarism in the face to face setting is applicable to the online setting as well (Grijalva, Kerkvliet, and Nowell, 2006). This chapter reports on the similarities and differences that have been found in existing studies, and examines the similarities and differences found at the secondary level, using the perspective of FLVS English teachers.

Literature Review

A significant amount of literature illustrates both the similarities and differences between the traditional classroom setting and the web-based setting (Baron & Crooks, 2005; Grijalva, Kerkvliet, & Nowell, 2006; Kennedy et al., 2000; Spaulding, 2011). Some researchers, including Grijalva, Kerkvliet, and Nowell, (2006), report that cheating and plagiarizing is the same in both formats, while others say that online education encourages, and provides more opportunities for academic dishonesty than traditional classrooms (Baron & Crooks, 2005; Kennedy et al., 2000). However, the findings are not only black and white.

Since neither side can be proven completely, the claims that the frequency of academic dishonesty is no different between the two formats are examined first. Although academic dishonesty in the online setting is widely believed to be a major problem, some research disproves this (Ridley & Husband, 1998; Spaulding, 2011). One study even reports that “there may be unnecessary alarm concerning the prevalence of academic dishonesty in online courses as opposed to face to face courses... academic dishonesty should not necessarily be more strongly focused on the online environment compared to the face to face environment” (Spaulding, 2011, p. 2721). This opinion may be surprising, but not uncommon; it leads to question where the impression that academic dishonesty in the online environment is an epidemic comes from and that it may be “exaggerated if not unfounded” (Ridley & Husband, 1998, para. 1) given the fact that people often behave similarly in both real-world and computer-mediated situations (Ferdig, & Mishra, 2004; Reeves, & Nass, 2003).

Black, Greaser, and Dawson (2008) report that “a vast majority of students (81%) feel that cheating within their online course is no more prevalent than cheating within a traditional course” (p. 28). Researchers attempt to assign a reason to why this may be the case; one of which calls into question “whether students engaged in online education have a fundamentally different perception of what does and does not constitute cheating compared to those in traditional educational environments” (Black et al., 2008, p. 28). This concern seems plausible, but is not yet proven valid due to the recentness of online education.

More evidence shows that knowledge exists on the prevalence of academic integrity in the online environment since no difference was found between academic integrity in the online

and traditional settings (Black et al., 2008; Ferdig, & Mishra, 2004; Grijalva, Nowell, & Kerkvliet, 2006; Reeves, & Nass, 2003). Supporters of this notion “were unable to directly substantiate motivations for cheating [in] an online learning environment” with their findings and justify this by stating that “people routinely respond to computer-mediated situations in the same way they respond to real world situations” (Black et al., 2008, p. 23-28; Ferdig, & Mishra, 2004; Reeves, & Nass, 2003). But perhaps one of the most interesting findings is that cheating is unique in the sense that it can start to seem like normal behavior; students may actually be *more* inclined to cheat in the traditional setting because they have the ability to see their peers doing it, where in distance learning, students may be geographically spread out and not perceive that others are doing it (Grijalva, Nowell, & Kerkvliet, 2006).

An important finding to note is that the demographics of students who are more or less likely to engage in academic dishonesty may also be consistent between the online and traditional settings. Male students and younger students are more likely to cheat or plagiarize in both settings (Lanier, 2006). Also, students in Greek organizations and students who have lower grades are more likely to cheat (Brown & Emmett, 2001; Finn & Frone, 2004; Lambert & Hogan, 2004).

Nevertheless, it can still be argued that differences between academic dishonesty in web-based and traditional classes exist. First is the belief that academic dishonesty occurs more in web-based education (Black et al., 2008). It should be noted that much of this literature attempts to justify the belief that cheating is more prevalent in the online setting by using logic and providing reasons for why it would make more sense that it does rather than straightforward

evidence. For example, it seems logical that students would cheat or plagiarize more in an online environment because of the perception of ease as opposed to in a face to face environment (Kolowich, 2011; Lanier, 2007; Ridley & Husband, 1998). This logic, which is largely discussed in Chapter 3, seems to appeal to researchers and educators and sheds some light on why the initial, widely-held consensus is that academic dishonesty is more prevalent in the online setting.

In addition, “opportunity to cheat is greater online” (Ridley & Husband, 1998, Hypotheses and Rationale section, para. 2). Web-based education provides uncountable technological resources which are more efficient and helpful than the limited tools that have traditionally been used in the classroom setting. One article illustrates this difference by observing the transition from using “conventional cheat sheets… [to] digital forms (notes stored in a digital device)” in order to engage in academic dishonesty (Yang & Gaskill, 2011, p. 3420). More opportunities to cheat or plagiarize come from the same tools that the web-based courses are based on—the Internet and technological devices—which use “search engines with immediate access to large amounts of information … [and] the expedient use of a “copy-and-paste” (CP) function” (Yang & Gaskill, 2011, p. 3420).

Also widely perceived as true, cheating in a web-based course is easier to do and get away with, which produces temptation (Kennedy et al., 2000; Yang & Gaskill, 2011). This creates a problem for many reasons, one of them being that “because both students and faculty believe it is easier to cheat in a distance learning class … as the number of distance learning class increases so will academic dishonesty (Kennedy et al., 2000, Discussion section). Another

report says that “online assessments have made academic cheating easier, by reducing the effort involved” (Yang & Gaskill, 2011, p. 3419). These findings are not uncommon in the literature on this topic, which is further discussed in Chapter 3.

Another factor that can increase students’ temptation to cheat in a web-based course more than in a traditional course is the amount of interaction with the instructor. Researchers have suggested that academic dishonesty in online classes is partly due to the absence of face to face interaction (Rowe, 2004; Wang, 2008). Students who have a more personal, face to face relationship with their teacher would feel more connected to the class and perceive that their work is valued among the other names on the roster. Therefore, “because students and faculty do not interact directly in web-based classes, it is often perceived that cheating will be more abundant in these classes” (Grijalva et al., 2006, Introduction section para. 2).

The method of detection also serves as a difference between academic dishonesty in online and traditional courses. In the online environment, teachers do not have the advantage of physically watching their students complete their work to ensure that it is original, and teachers cannot possibly know if students are completing assessments without the aid of outside resources (Olt, 2002). Conversely, online educators do have the distinct advantage of online plagiarism detection tools, such as Turnitin.com, where classroom teachers are often handed paper copies and would have to search for plagiarized work themselves (Baron & Crooks, 2005).

Moreover, according to Heberling (2002) and Olt (2002), online educators communicate with their students mostly through written language and therefore have the unique advantage of knowing each student’s writing style so that they can better assess if a student’s written work is

their own based on style, tone, and grammar, among others. This would be more difficult for traditional classroom teachers who mostly communicate with students verbally, and would be less able to detect plagiarized work based on writing style (Baron & Crooks, 2005).

As for a comparison of the cheating itself, Bunn, Caudill, and Gropper (1992) have differentiated between the two formats by naming two types: planned cheating and panic cheating. Planned cheating applies more to web-based courses and “may involve making crib sheets for tests, copying homework, or plagiarizing a paper... with full knowledge that it is wrong.” In the face to face setting, panic cheating may be more common because the circumstances to engage in academic dishonesty may arise more often (Grijalva et al., 2006). For example, panic cheating may come into play “during a test when the student finds herself at a loss for an answer” whereas online students will not find themselves in that situation (Grijalva et al., 2006, A Model of Cheating section, para. 1). Panic cheating and planned cheating are certainly not the only types of cheating and may not necessarily apply to all situations; however, it does bring up an interesting distinction between the two educational environments. Other, more obvious differences in the cheating itself have to do with the resources that are available. Students in brick and mortar classes do not have to ability to search the Internet and copy and paste written work during an in-class writing assignment. Similarly, web-based education students do not always have a peer next to them to copy. Lastly, forms of cheating can bridge the gap between the two formats, “but could be less effortful on the level of cheaters’ involvements” (Yang & Gaskill, 2011, p. 3419).

The literature that both proves and disproves that academic dishonesty is either the same or different in online and face to face classes shows that no absolute answer exists either way.

The fact that the findings are so conflicted about which format cheating is most prevalent in may actually make the general consensus that academic dishonesty is worse in the online setting invalid. However, the importance of logic, temptation, and the availability of resources also cannot be discounted. This chapter touched on many topics under the blanket subject of academic dishonesty which will be further expanded upon in the following chapters.

Florida Virtual School Survey Results

Survey items 3 and 5 are both applicable to Chapter 2. Item 3 asks “Why do you think students take online classes rather than face to face classes?” and lists seven possible answers with the option of selecting more than one of them. The outcome of each possible answer is listed below:

1. “Students could not fit the class in their schedule at school” = Selected 21 times (78%).
2. “Students are making up credits due to failing a class in school” = Selected 25 times (93%), making it the most popular choice with all but 2 respondents choosing it.
3. “Students feel that online classes are easier” = Selected 12 times (44%).
4. “Students are fulfilling a state requirement” = Selected 9 times (33%).

5. “Going to face to face classes doesn't fit in with a work schedule” = Selected 14 times (52%).
6. “Students simply wish to stay home and learn” = Selected 23 times (85%), making it the second most popular choice among respondents.

The seventh and final possible response was left open-ended, allowing the teachers to input their own perspective; thirteen teachers responded with alternative reasons for why students enroll in online classes rather than face to face classes. Out of the thirteen, five reported health issues/medical conditions, three reported bullying/social issues, two reported a virtual lab at the students' face to face school requires them to take an online course, two reported that traditional schools do not provide enough individualized instruction for students' needs, one reported that students “need room in [their] school schedule for other classes, and one reported that “home schooled students …or Exceptional Ed students [take virtual classes because they] need more help than they can get in the classroom.”

Survey item 5 open-endedly asked “Do you think cheating and plagiarizing online differs from face to face? If so, how?” This question yielded a total of 24 responses out of 27 submitted surveys. Overall, about the same amount of “yes” responses and “no” responses were provided, with some in the middle. However, the greater variety in responses to this survey item came from the explanations and comments. The explanations and comments that supported the notion that academic dishonesty is the same in both formats included:

- “Mostly cheating occurs when a student has procrastinated or over-scheduled themselves and they come up against a deadline. They feel it is the only way to finish on time. It seems to be the same regardless of mode of instruction.”
- “Not really, students will try to cheat no matter where they are.”
- “The information is extremely easy to access either way.”
- “If students want to cheat, they will find a way despite the delivery of their academics.”
- “I feel like students cheat just as much in the classroom as they might cheat online.”

On the other hand, the explanations and comments that the teachers had for how academic dishonesty differs between formats also included:

- “[The students] have the option of dropping the class when they're caught if it happens during the first few weeks” of an online course.
- “I do think that students think they are less likely to get caught online, even though that isn't necessarily the case.”
- “Teaching online actually gives me more tools to know when my students are cheating than when I was in the classroom.”
- “I have found online courses, when using programs such as Turnitin.com, have a much stronger accountability rate than a submission in a face to face classroom with hard copies.”

- “There is a greater opportunity for the teacher to witness their writing in class, supervised, with no assistance, and compare it to what's done at home without supervision or assistance, which often makes discrepancies in skill quite clear.”

Further, a reoccurring explanation for how the two formats are different was a lack of face to face interaction between students and instructors. A few examples of this are:

- “They don't have to face us in person and can avoid the phone calls to discuss it if it happens.”
- “Since they don't "see" the teacher, I think they feel that they will have a better chance of not getting caught.”
- “There is no one to "face" when cheating.”
- “They are not being physically "watched" by an adult in the room.”
- “Students may "think" it's easier since a teacher is not in the room with them.”
- “Face to face creates a far more personal, daily "touch," and so when students cheat on an in-class exam, it's right in front of the teacher.”

Lastly, some explanations submitted that did not fully support either the “different” or the “same” side include:

- “I feel that cheating online is better monitored than it is face to face. We have more resources available to monitor student learning.”
- “I think it differs in how they do it, but not that they do it. In other words I believe it is done as much or more in the classroom setting as well.”

- “I think it's harder to prove cheating in traditional environment – online teachers have access to the same cheat sites students do.”
- “In general, students cheat for the same reasons online as they do in face to face.”
- “I believe the cheating can take different forms in an online setting with the ability to access a multitude of sources at their fingertips while working in the course and simply copying and pasting.”
- “I think there is more pressure to cheat in face to face classes. Many boyfriends expect the girls to complete homework for them.”

As with Chapter 1, the survey results for Chapter 2 are consistent with the literature. Both the arguments for academic dishonesty being either the same or different in online and traditional classrooms are supported by the results of the survey. This is especially true in regard to the lack of face to face interaction in web-based courses being a factor in a student's decision to cheat or plagiarize. The teachers' responses for this point mirror Grijalva et al. (2006), Rowe (2004), and Wang (2008). Chapter 3 will provide reasons for why students engage in academic dishonesty online.

CHAPTER 3: REASONS STUDENTS CHEAT OR PLAGIARIZE IN ONLINE EDUCATION & ATTITUDES TOWARDS ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

A variety of research studies have been conducted that reveal the reasons why students engage in academic dishonesty (Grijalva et al., 2006; Howard, 2001; Ma et al., 2007; Pearson, 2011; Sterngold, 2004; Yang & Gaskill, 2011). A large number of the reasons that have been identified in the literature apply to academic dishonesty in general, and can be manifested in both the traditional and online setting. This reasoning is supported by Yang & Gaskill (2011) who argue that “it is unlikely the underlying reasons for cheating and students’ awareness of digital cheating are dissimilar to the long-established academic cheating from non-digital sources” (p. 3420). Also supported by evidence from the survey of FLVS English teachers, one response supplied was “in general, students cheat for the same reasons online as they do in face to face.”

This chapter discusses the variety of reasons why students engage in academic dishonesty. Some of these include “peer culture, Web sites that facilitate plagiarism, pressure to achieve, few consequences or punishments, and lack of understanding of the concept of plagiarism” (Ma et al. 2007, p. 77). Other reasons more specific to the online setting are the belief that it is easier to cheat in online courses, less personal contact with the instructor, and some students may feel that cheating is necessary to reach a goal (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Kennedy et al., 2000; Ma et al., 2008; Yang & Gaskill, 2011). Lastly, the perceptions and attitudes of both students and educators are important factors that contribute to academic dishonesty (Black et al., 2008; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Paulhus, 1991; Spaulding, 2011).

Literature Review

Reasons Students Engage in Academic Dishonesty

Many pieces of literature on this topic report similar ideas as to why students engage in academic dishonesty (Black et al., 2008; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Kennedy et al., 2000; Ma et al., 2008; Paulhus, 1991; Spaulding, 2011; Yang & Gaskill, 2011). The first common reason has to do with the instructor. In the web-based setting, a relationship is not necessarily established because “students and faculty do not interact directly” (Grijalva et al., 2006, Introduction, para. 2). This lack of direct interaction can give students the sense that teachers are not concerned about their performance in the course and will not be able to detect any cheating; this can lead to increased cheating and plagiarizing in online courses (Rowe, 2004; Wang, 2008). Instructors can affect their students’ academic integrity in other ways as well. Sterngold (2004) presents the case that instructors may be indirectly influencing their students to cheat. Some assignments are seemingly impossible to students, and teachers may expect them to already have the tools and skills to complete the tasks. The sense of pressure and feeling of inadequacy make the idea of plagiarizing a well-written piece of work for a better grade than they feel that they can earn themselves seem rational. Howard (2001) posits that instructors put little energy into creating assignments, which encourages the same amount of effort from the students. Howard’s idea is supported by Nancy Pearson (2011) who criticizes instructors for “assigning work that lacks technological relevance; reusing old and outdated assignments;

having unrealistic expectations; not teaching necessary skills; not adequately checking sources; and accepting work without proper documentation” (p. 55).

Other reasons for engaging in academic dishonesty have to do with individual characteristics, which include skills, personality, and goals. Kohlberg first recognized this in 1973 suggesting that each student who engages in academic dishonesty does so for their own reasons, while also hoping to increase the gain and decrease the punishment as much as possible. Many students are tempted to cheat because they struggle in school and feel inadequate academically; for many students, writing is a stressful struggle (Gourlay & Greig, 2007). Dr. Lesley Gourlay and Janis Greig (2007) also listed student-reported reasons in this category such as “multiple deadlines causing lack of motivation, feeling like giving up when struggling with writing, [and] feeling overwhelmed when reading” (p. 8). Students are inclined to copy written work when they are aware of their own “weak research and writing skills” (Sterngold, 2004, p. 20) and are encouraged to continue copying when their undetected plagiarism earns them “good feedback or marks” (Gourlay & Greig, 2007, p. 9). Students sometimes feel that, on their own, “they could not achieve [as] well within a short time” (Ma et al., 2008, p. 200).

Personality may also be a factor leading to academic dishonesty, especially in adolescents. Middle school, high school, and undergraduate college students can be lazy, have relaxed morals, lack responsibility, and be unaware of rules (Sterngold, 2004). Other “personal and environmental factors” can influence students’ cheating as well (Black et al., 2008, p. 24). Studies support that students in the online environment can be inclined to cheat because of lack of familial support, distractions that cause students to run out of time to complete assignments

before deadlines, pressure from peers or parents to perform well in school, “or personal understandings of cheating consequences (e.g., outcome expectation) stored in long term memory” (Yang & Gaskill, 2011, p. 3420). Students who are not encouraged or motivated often feel that they have no choice but to turn in something rather than nothing in hopes of partial credit (Grijalva et al., 2006). Also related is the influence that parents can have on a student’s decision to cheat. Newell Chiesl from Indiana State University suggests that parents set an example of cheating by doing things like “fibbing about [their] age... [and] exaggerate[ing] income tax deductions” (2007, p. 204) which teaches their children to rationalize cheating and lying.

A great deal of the literature on this subject also discusses the influence of personal educational goals on academic dishonesty (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Gehring, Nuss, & Pavela 1986; Whitley, & Keith-Spiegel, 2001; Yang & Gaskill, 2011). Since goals are often the reason why people “have different levels of intentions and attributions to engage in academic activities” (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Yang & Gaskill, 2011, p. 3420), they also apply to why people cheat or plagiarize. Students sometimes feel that they are incapable of reaching their goals without cheating or plagiarizing. These personal academic goals can include “getting a good grade, avoiding looking incompetent, getting admission into college/graduate school, or impressing the teacher or/and peers” (Yang & Gaskill, 2011, p. 3420). Furthermore, students justify academic dishonesty when they feel that the material in their classes is not going to help them achieve their goals (Gehring, Nuss, & Pavela 1986). But one alarming finding by Whitley, & Keith-Spiegel

(2001) comes from a professor's interview with a student in which the student stated that "anything worth having is worth cheating for."

Lack of serious consequences and ignorance about plagiarism may also lead to academic dishonesty. Ma et. al. (2008) reported that after students had cheated once, they had discovered that "there was no immediate consequence for them if they cheated occasionally... [making] risks to cheat [worthwhile] because the odds of getting caught were low" (p. 200). Additionally, "some students fall into plagiarizing work because they simply do not understand paraphrasing and citation rules" (Pearson, 2011, p. 54) which is generally called unconscious or accidental plagiarism. Unconscious or accidental plagiarism may be another cause of academic dishonesty by educators. Students being unaware of their plagiarism could be a result of improper or inadequate instruction about research and citation.

Conversely, only a small piece of literature proposes that students who practice good academic integrity do so "because they know plagiarism is wrong, they're afraid of getting caught, or they don't feel the need to cheat because they are confident about their research and writing skills" (Sterngold, 2004, p. 18).

To summarize, students commonly regard web-based courses as being easier because of the convenience they offer (i.e. no specific location, meeting time, dress code, technological resources) (Kennedy et al., 2000; Kolowich, 2011; Ma et al., 2008; Yang & Gaskill, 2011). This perception may lead students to become more relaxed and feel less pressure to follow rules than in a formal classroom setting. The element of comfort and the perceived lack of consequences contribute significantly to the motivation to cheat, and without the teacher actually being able to

see the students provides for much more freedom. Considering all of these factors, it becomes apparent that “cheating is more often than not a crime of opportunity” (Kolowich, 2011, para. 11); web-based courses provide for an outstanding number of opportunities that make it easier for students to cheat by “reducing the effort involved” (Yang & Gaskill, 2011, p. 3419). The ease of cheating in online courses comes from the accessibility of technology and how it plays a major role in making cheating and plagiarizing virtually effortless. Computers and handheld devices allow students to collaborate on independent assignments and provide access to websites which are a “convenient way to engage in digital plagiarism” (Ma et al., 2008, p. 200). As a result of this, Kennedy et al. (2000) states that “both students and faculty believe it is easier to cheat in a distance learning class” (para. 1). The multiple opportunities and tools at the convenience of students that make online cheating so easy will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Perceptions of Academic Dishonesty

Perhaps the most influential reason for why students cheat or plagiarize has to do with perceptions and attitudes. Teachers are becoming more aware of the fact that their students do not view cheating and plagiarizing the same way that they do and it may be defined differently between students as well (Schmelkin, Gilbert, Spencer, Pincus, & Silva, 2008). Although many of the reasons students cheat or plagiarize can be applied to both the classroom and online setting, it has not been proven that “students engaged in online education have a fundamentally

different perception of what does and does not constitute cheating compared to those in traditional educational environments” (Black et al., 2008, p. 28). Perceptions in both web-based and traditional education will be analyzed.

To disprove the idea that student perceptions about academic integrity are different in the online or classroom setting, one study at The University of Florida found that students perceived that “there was less cheating in online classes as compared to face to face classes” (Black et al., 2008, p. 25). However, despite the fact that many of them did “perceiv[e] a higher level of learning as compared to face to face classes,” the students “who perceived they were learning more … were less likely to perceive that there is cheating occurring” (Black et al., 2008, p. 27). This finding would therefore prove that students may cheat because they do not feel as though they are learning in their web-based course. Additionally, this study supported the previously discussed idea that the lack of interaction with the instructor influences academic dishonesty in the sense that “students who had more interactions with their instructors and faculty were less likely to feel cheating was occurring within their online course” (Black et al., 2008, p. 27). Although beneficial, these findings do not definitively determine whether or not perceptions are different based on the class format.

A large part of student perceptions of academic dishonesty has to do with their peers. Many times, students are likely to perceive “much higher incidences of academic dishonesty in others than in themselves” (Spaulding, 2011, p. 2720). This is perhaps due to social desirability bias, the tendency is to answer questions about oneself in order to gain social approval rather than portray one’s actual feelings (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Paulhus, 1991). Evidence for this

comes from a survey of online teacher education students; 1.9% of these students admitted that they “had done this at least 5 times” versus 40.7% who “indicated observing others participating in this activity” (Spaulding, 2011, p. 2721). Another study indicated that social desirability bias is a factor even in anonymous surveys; people are “hesitant to admit...to engaging in dishonest behaviors” but “may have been more willing to respond honestly regarding the behavior of others” (Spaulding, 2009, p. 195).

To continue with peer influence, a sense of community may be created when students perceive that others are behaving dishonestly; this perception leads students to believe that academic dishonesty is acceptable for them too. However, one article suggests using this sense of community in a positive way to deter cheating (Kolowich, 2011). This method would “explore the extent to which greater social engagement may increase the effectiveness of honor codes in online courses” (Kolowich, 2011, para. 13). It would also work so that instead of coming together to behave dishonesty, students could come together against it, sort of like a pact against cheating and plagiarizing.

Although the teachers’ perspective will be analyzed in the FLVS survey results, an interesting point that came up in the literature is that instructor perceptions may not be reliable. The importance of this finding is that the survey of Florida Virtual School teachers may yield vastly different results than a survey of Florida Virtual School students, or may not accurately depict the current status of academic dishonesty in secondary level online education. This concept is illustrated in a study at the University of Tennessee where “when asked if students would take a stolen copy of a test, 62% of faculty felt the student would do so compared to 42%

of students who indicated that they actually would take it” (Spaulding, 2009, p. 185). This finding exposes yet another challenge in determining the actual prevalence of academic dishonesty.

Attitudes Toward Academic Dishonesty

The literature pertaining to student attitudes towards academic dishonesty centers mainly on one issue: a deterioration of ethics. The following evidence reveals that today’s students tend to believe that cheating and plagiarizing is not a serious problem, which is frequently at odds with how their instructors feel. For example, students and instructors have been found to disagree on specific instances of academic dishonesty; a study by Schmelkin, Gilbert, Spencer, Pincus, and Silva (2008) reported that students and instructors agree more on what is a less serious offence and less on what constitutes a more serious offence. Also, students view using the Internet to cheat as “an easy and acceptable option” (Underwood & Szabo 2003, p. 464). This has become a problem in English classes especially, because it is “the site where secondary students are first introduced to the humanities” and are taught “the ethical values of our society” (Thomas & Sassi, 2011, p. 49).

There has been a large shift in student thinking about academic dishonesty that can be credited mostly to the convenience technology provides, and how technology allows for more communication. In one study, “students reported their copying and pasting as excitedly as when

they were talking about shopping online or chatting online” because “in their eyes, those things were not that different” (Ma et al., 2008, p. 200). As discussed previously, a “common reason mentioned by students... for engaging in academic cheating was the fact that others were doing it” (Ma et al., 2008, p. 200). A result of this is that “students develop a shared understanding of what is acceptable” and “find it hard to tell collaboration from cheating” (Ma et al., 2008, p. 199-200). This shared understanding of what is acceptable also depends on another previously mentioned concept of groups; students will have different view based on their membership to a certain ‘group’ or demographic.

In general however, student views are trending. One article provided the statistic that 53% of students that were surveyed thought that it was not a major problem that more students are cheating now (Who’s Who, 1998). The same article also states that “young people [are] developing a more lax attitude toward cheating” (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 1998, 2002, 2004, 2006; Ma et al., 2008, p. 198; Who’s Who, 1998). Further evidence that students’ morals are shifting comes from the fact that they are purposefully engaging in academic dishonesty; “some engage in unethical practices to propel themselves to the degree necessary to reach the A level regardless of the possible negative ramifications of such actions” (Pearson, 2011, p. 54). This shift seems to be moving at the same rapid rate that technology is advancing.

Florida Virtual School Survey Results

Survey items 4, 8, and 10 are most directly related to this Chapter's topic, as well as certain responses from item 5. Item 4 asks, "Why do you feel students cheat or plagiarize in online classes?" and provides 7 possible responses in which more than one may be selected. The first possible response, "It is easy to cheat with all of the online resources students have access to," was selected 19 times (70%) making it the most commonly chosen response. This concept was also touched on in the teacher supplied responses to item 5. The responses that support this concept from item 5 include:

- "I think since students are already on the computer, it is really easy to just open a new tab and search for the answers."
- "Easier to copy and paste, either from a fellow classmate or an online source."
- "The work is on-line so it is much more tempting to "Google" versus do your own work."
- "Working on the computer makes it more tempting. With just a click, you can plagiarize someone's work."

The results of the possible responses 2-7 for item 4 follow:

- 2) "There is a lot of temptation to cheat or plagiarize" = Selected 16 times (59%).
- 3) "Students perceive that other students are cheating and plagiarizing" = Selected 7 times (26%).
- 4) "Students feel that there is less chance of getting caught" = Selected 18 times (67%).

5) "Students do not have face to face interaction with the instructor" = Selected 7 times (26%).

6) "Students are not being monitored" = Selected 3 times (11%).

7) "Other. Please Specify" = Selected 8 times. Teacher supplied responses include:

- i. "We have loads of monitoring - mostly they cheat when they are running out of time... pressure to finish and graduate."
- ii. "Students are trying to complete their course quickly." / "They feel pressure to complete the course quickly."
- iii. "Students do not feel cheating is wrong; "everyone" does it."
- iv. "Our students know, after the first infraction, that they are being monitored."
- v. "Students get lazy with their work and take the easy way out."
- vi. "Many students are not being taught moral standards at home."
- vii. "They are trying to "save time" and finish the work; they don't want to invest much effort."

The main points discussed in the literature review portion of this chapter highlighted that students engage in academic dishonesty because they feel pressure to meet a goal, academic dishonesty has a social/peer aspect, temptation exists, and students' ethics are becoming more lax. Many of the responses to item 4 are consistent with these points; however, some do not support the literature. For example, the response that "Students perceive that other students are cheating and plagiarizing," was only selected, or mentioned 8 times, which is surprising considering how prevalent this point was in the literature and how low this number is compared

with the other responses. Similarly, the fact that “Students do not have face to face interaction with the instructor” was chosen only 7 times, and “Students are not being monitored” was chosen only 3 times is unexpected since it was brought up multiple times in the open-ended responses to item 3.

Survey item 8 asked the teachers to rate their perception of how seriously they think their students take cheating and plagiarizing. Teachers selected one response on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being “Not seriously at all,” and 5 being “Very seriously.” The most popular response was 4: “Slightly serious” with 11 selections (42%) followed by 2: “Not too seriously” (27%). Responses 3: “Neutral” (19%), 5: “Very seriously” (8%), and 1: “Not seriously at all” (4%) rounded out the bottom three responses. The cluster in the middle of this data only slightly supports the literature’s emphasis on lax morals as being a reason that students engage in academic dishonesty in the online setting, even though it was a teacher supplied response to item 4 (“Many students are not being taught moral standards at home”).

Lastly, survey item 10 provides statistics on the perception of FLVS English teachers on the amount of plagiarism that is accidental. The majority (18 out of 26, or 69%) of the respondents ranked the amount of accidental plagiarism a 2: “Some of it” on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being “None of it” and 5 being “All of it.” The other rankings are as follows:

- 1: “None of it”—5 selections, 19%
- 3: “Neutral”—1 selection, 4%
- 4: “A good amount of it”—2 selections, 8%
- 5: “All of it”—0 selections, 0%

These findings are consistent with the literature in the sense that only a small portion of it actually discusses accidental plagiarism as a factor in academic dishonesty (Pearson, 2011). Chapter 4 will provide methods commonly used to engage in academic dishonesty.

CHAPTER 4: HOW STUDENTS CHEAT OR PLAGIARIZE IN ONLINE EDUCATION

As with Chapter 3, much of the literature on this subject is not completely specific to either online or traditional education because students use advanced technology to cheat in both formats (Glater, 2006; Szabo & Underwood, 2004; Yang & Gaskill, 2011). Students are becoming “smarter” in their cheating methods, moving away from simply peeking at your neighbor’s answers during a test. These “new techniques of cheating rang[e] from changing key words or facts to using chat rooms and other forms of Internet forums to conduct online cheating” (Pearson, 2011, p. 55). Additionally, the notion that “the modern-day plagiarist is one step ahead of the teacher by obtaining information and subscriptions from a host of online sources including companies that promote their services under the label of *educational resources*” is becoming more common (Pearson, 2011, p. 55). As a result of this, instructors must be just as tech savvy as the students.

Literature Review

Methods of Cheating & Plagiarizing

In the past, students had to get especially creative if they wanted to cheat or plagiarize undetected. A few traditional methods still exist such as “prepar[ing] work for another student to submit” (Spaulding, 2011, p. 2721), but in education today, engaging in academic dishonesty is

easy. Each piece of technology that is used as an educational resource doubles as an academic dishonesty tool. The Internet, for example, is both a giant wealth of information and a source for prewritten term papers. Students can use “copied information from Internet websites and submit it as their own work” (Spaulding, 2009, p. 194), and can buy “papers sold on the Internet” (Craig et al., 2010, p. 50). Other more innovative methods that students have created using the Internet include creating their own websites to post and share homework answers, and using “web sites that were designed for teachers, where answer keys for problems were accessible” (Ma et al., 2008, p. 200).

Since each technological device has the capability of being both an educational resource and an academic dishonesty tool, even the very same computer commands can be used for the wrong purpose. For example, “the expedient use of a “copy-and-paste” (CP) function” is a helpful tool in word processing but is the perfect function for plagiarism as well (Yang & Gaskill, 2011, p. 3420). Devices other than computers such as cell phones, calculators, and tablets can also be educational tools but are used as portals to academic dishonesty through communication with classmates. Students “can take credit for documents … that they get as e-mail attachments from friends living down the hall or a thousand miles away” (Sterngold, 2004, p. 16). Further, e-mails, Facebook messages, and text messages are perfect for sharing answers to online test questions or copying another student’s assignment.

A large scale example of using technology for academic dishonesty comes from the University of Nebraska. In 2008, seniors in the College of Dentistry were given permission by the Dean of the College of Dentistry to “compile and sell a 1,200-page ‘study file’ that included

test questions, lecture notes, PowerPoints, charts, tables and other course materials” (Lee, 2008, para. 6). The study file CDs were sold to first-year students for \$150 and went towards funding “Pig Roast,” an annual party at the University of Nebraska (Lee, 2008). The Dean eventually stopped the production and selling of the study file CDs after “a number of dental faculty ... raised concerns about the selling of intellectual property” (Lee, 2008, para. 4).

Sources

As previously mentioned, students use Internet sites to copy written work. In a study called “Plagiarism and the Web: A Comparison of Internet Sources for Secondary and Higher Education Students,” over 33.5 million papers that had been submitted to Turnitin.com by secondary and college students were analyzed to determine the most plagiarized Internet sources (Nagel, 2011, para. 2). The findings were placed into categories and ranked with number 1 being the most plagiarized:

1. “Social and content sharing sites...includ[ing] Facebook, Yahoo Answers, Answers.com, SlideShare, and others.”
2. “Homework and academic sites...such as nih.gov, medlibrary.org, coursehero.com, and bookrags.com”
3. “Cheat sites and paper mills”
4. “Traditional online publications (magazine and news sites)”

5. “Encyclopedias (including Wikipedia, Britannica, and Encyclopedia.com) (Nagel, 2011, Top Categories for Plagiarism section).

The same study found that students at the secondary level were more inclined than the college students to pull information from the social and content sharing sites. The reason for this is believed to be that “younger students have a more difficult time judging which sources are appropriate to use in written work” (iParadigms, 2011, Summary section). Although its category came in at the bottom of the list, Wikipedia was the number one individual source that is most commonly plagiarized (iParadigms, 2011; Nagel, 2011).

Aside from this study, other specific sources have been identified as being popular among plagiarists. For example, Ma et. al. (2008) listed “www.al-termpaper.com, www.academicpapers.com, www.bignerds.com, www.cheater.com, and www.cheathouse.com” as website sources and “electronic online encyclopedias or CD-ROMs” as other technological sources (p. 199).

Florida Virtual School Survey Results

For this chapter, survey item 11 asked the FLVS English teachers to describe a previous incidence of cheating or plagiarism in their class. This item yielded 20 anecdotes that described mostly incidences of plagiarism and few incidences of cheating. Some of the plagiarism offenses include:

- “A student turned in another student's exact essay.”
- “Student took a flash drive from another student, submitted other students work as her own.”
- “The last one I had was a girl who emailed fellow classmates asking to see some of their files. I caught it early thanks to a couple of honest students who wondered if that was an "okay thing to do." Only one other student took her up on it.”
- “Most common form is "note-taking"; students think if they provide a URL, copy/pasting is okay.”
- “One of my students completed research related to Julius Caesar and Rome, and she copied a good deal of the information from the internet that related to the topic but didn't answer the question.”
- “A student submitted a poem found online to satisfy an assignment requirement.”
- “Just today I had a boyfriend/girlfriend, both in the same class, submit 4 identical assignments.”
- “A student copied the entire online summary of a court case and submitted it.”
- “Several students thought it was OK to copy a definition or example from the Internet and use it without citing the source.”

Additionally, cheating incidences that were reported include:

- “Students have used Yahoo answers for essay questions on the final exam.”

- “A response is copied from yahoo answers and directly copy /pasted into the assessment.”
- “I asked the student if he was doing his work. He honestly told me that his girlfriend had been doing it.”
- “She had copied an answer from sparknotes.com into a quiz about the prologue from Romeo and Juliet.”
- “He was unable to discuss the basic items, I asked him to tell me a little bit about what he did to prepare and complete the assignment. Through the discussion, he said he had help from a sibling.”

These results reinforce the literature detailing both the methods and sources that students use to cheat and plagiarize. These anecdotes reveal that students use technology to copy from each other (like the USB example) and the Internet, as suggested by numerous researchers (Craig et al., 2010; Spaulding, 2009; Sterngold, 2004; Yang & Gaskill, 2011), and use commonly plagiarized sources such as Yahoo.com, as reported by iParadigms (2011) and Nagel (2011). Chapter 5 discusses tools and methods online instructors use to detect academic dishonesty.

CHAPTER 5: HOW TEACHERS DETECT ACADEMIC DISHONESTY IN THEIR ONLINE CLASSES

As of now, instructors have tools and strategies for detecting plagiarism in their students' written work but it is almost impossible to know if students are being honest in a non-proctored online exam or quiz (Olt, 2002). Furthermore, Warner (1971) suggests that once cheating is detected, teachers should avoid overreacting, feeling threatened, getting angry, publically correcting the student, being quick to punish the student, and most importantly avoid viewing the student negatively or labeling them as academically dishonest.

Literature Review

Plagiarism is the easiest type of academic dishonesty to detect in online classes because technology gives educators tools that match work students turn in to documents that already exist. One of the most well-known online resources that does this is Turnitin.com which allows teachers to create an account that students submit their written assignments to. Turnitin.com compares the submitted assignments to a vast number of journals, books, periodicals, and other student papers that have been published on the Internet and reports to the instructor how much of each submission is copied (turnitin.com, Home page). Institutions purchase this service for all of their instructors to use, and often submitting assignments through Turnitin.com is a requirement. Similarly, SafeAssignment “(<http://www.mydropbox.com>) which is an add-in to Blackboard...

allow[s] the professor to compare the files to a large pool of work" (Lecher, 2005, p. 182).

Turnitin.com can also function as an add-on to an online course's platform, such as Blackboard.

Along with Turnitin.com and SafeAssignment, instructors use search engines such as Google. Ma et al. (2007) found that middle school students often used Google to find documents to complete their assignments, and because of this, Google "may also be used effectively in middle schools against plagiarism" (p. 80). Google is one example of a tool that students use to access material to plagiarize, but as discussed in Chapter 4, they have many other online resources as well. These same websites, however, can double as detection tools for teachers by simply searching the sites for the work students submitted.

Outside of online sources, software programs have been tested for effectiveness. One example of plagiarism detection software is Wcopyfind (Lecher, 2005). This is great free software; however, it is limited because it can only search local files such as network drives, removable drives, or hard drives on a specific computer (Lecher, 2005). This program was proved successful in the classroom, but does not necessarily prevent students from using other resources to complete assignments in distance learning (Lecher, 2005). But as of now, detection of plagiarism is not the main concern because of the technology we have to do that, and the fact that more literature exists on how to prevent academic dishonesty before it happens.

Aside from technological options, online instructors can still use traditional methods of perceptive plagiarism detection. Some anecdotes in the literature reveal that teachers can almost sense plagiarism in their students' work or become suspicious that a student plagiarized by picking up on certain clues (Gardiner, 2001; Lecher, 2005; Pearson, 2011). Although students

rarely copy off of one another anymore because of all of the other resources that they have access to, online teachers can still use “standard methods of comparing student work” (Lecher, 2005, p. 182). Additionally, online teachers can notice “a discrepancy between the writing/speaking style of the student and the linguistic features of a plagiarized work” (Pearson, 2011, p. 55). For example, one student’s online discussion board postings may read much differently than a research paper that they submit, leading to suspicion that one of the assignments was plagiarized. Similarly, students who copy and paste portions of written work into their assignments “without removing certain website formatting features from their final drafts” or citing the material will be detected by their online instructor (Pearson, 2011, p. 55).

Students can be guilty of plagiarism even when citations are present in their work. In one instance, a student copied material that was “written in perfect APA style, even though [the class] had never discussed APA style” which can make it evident to the online instructor that it was not original work (Gardiner, 2001, p. 174). This shows that written work can be ‘too good,’ even though it may be exciting to the teacher if it appears as though their students are learning to be skilled writers and researchers. Students can make other blunders when plagiarizing their work as well. In one article, a case was described where a student submitted a paper that contained the phrase, ““while I was working on my undergraduate degree...,”” when the student hadn’t graduated high school yet (Gardiner, 2001, p. 174). Clues such as these give teachers the ability to detect plagiarism for smaller assignments and in cases where technological detection tools are not used.

A much greater challenge is to detect cheating on online quizzes and tests. Online tests and quizzes are more likely to be testing a student's web-surfing skills, rather than their knowledge of content. In almost all online courses, tests and quizzes are not proctored and students have the ability to use peers, books, and online resources without anyone knowing, or stopping them. Students frequently use other resources to complete online tests and quizzes which essentially reduces them to activities. Online educators have reduced control over online assessments making it difficult to detect when students are cheating on an exam. A small amount of detection can be accomplished by comparing the timing and answers of each student's online exam, but this can only lead to suspicion and does not prove it for sure.

As a result of online educators' ample ability to detect plagiarism and limited ability to detect cheating on assessments, more emphasis is being placed on prevention (discussed in depth in Chapter 7) rather than detection. This emphasis is rooted in the fact that prevention addresses what is most alarming about the topic of academic dishonesty, which is how lightly students regard it.

Florida Virtual School Survey Results

Survey item 7 provides new information on the topic of detection of academic dishonesty by open-endedly asking FLVS English teachers to describe the methods that they use for detection. In the results for item 7, almost all of the 25 responses reported Turnitin.com as their primary method for detection, since it is a requirement at FLVS. The other responses mention

variations of the same method: picking up on clues in students' submitted work. Some of these include:

- “When you grade the same assignments for two years, it's very easy to spot the ones that are identically the same - it's usually the same mistakes.”
- “I look for correct comma placement and high level vocabulary.”
- “I chat with students frequently to see if they can answer simple questions about their own work.”
- “...knowledge of student work/understanding; Google searching sometimes.”
- “If you've spoken to your students and read some of their original work, it is clear what they are capable of versus what they submit.”

These responses are consistent with the methods that were reported in the literature such as Gardiner (2001) who found that work was perfectly written and beyond the level of the student who turned it in. Other examples include Lecher's (2005) method of comparing student work and Pearson's (2011) idea of detecting differences in verbal language and written work. Chapter 6 continues with consequences for academic dishonesty that has been detected.

CHAPTER 6: CONSEQUENCES AND POLICIES OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY IN ONLINE EDUCATION

The topic of consequences for academic dishonesty has been evolving over the past 32 years. In the 1980s, teachers admitted to ignoring instances where students cheated. Hardy (1982) stated that instructors feared lawsuits from students so they either let instances of academic dishonesty go unpunished or worked it out with the individual student. Some teachers even reported being afraid that students would “sue [them] for libel if [they] accused them of cheating” (Dowd, 1992, p. 12). This turning point made it apparent that academic policies regarding cheating and plagiarism were necessary to “empower both faculty and students” (Dowd, 1992, p. 16). However, the consequences for academic dishonesty back then were more severe in comparison to modern day punishments such as those that are reported in the FLVS survey results (Bushweller, 1999).

Regardless of whether a class is web-based or in a classroom, the value of academic integrity is equal and therefore the consequences should be as well. But despite this, academic dishonesty still occurs at an increasing rate. The disconnect between an academic integrity policy and the number of actual instances of academic dishonesty has to do with enforcement. The strength of academic integrity policies comes from students seeing the consequences that it outlines applied to real situations (Ma et al., 2008; Toprak et al., 2010). Unfortunately, however, not all literature on the subject reports that enforcement is always carried out (Ma et al., 2008; Stricherz, 2001; Toprak et al., 2010).

Today, honor codes are common among academic institutions and our society upholds the belief that plagiarism is a serious offence that should have strict consequences to match. This is evidenced by the phrase “academic death penalty,” which was coined by Rebecca Moore Howard (1995) in regard to the ultimate consequence of academic dishonesty: expulsion (p. 789).

Literature Review

Academic institutions create their own policies on academic integrity that outline the standards that they wish for both their faculty and students to adhere to, even though teachers often use their own discretion about what action, if any, will be taken. These policies can range in severity and appropriateness in regard to their “recommended consequences (e.g., course actions, reports and sanctions)” for academic dishonesty (Robinson-Zañartu, Peña, Cook-Morales, Peña, Afshani, & Nguyen, 2005, p. 318). An example of a course of action, which is in place at Rochester Institute of Technology, is that “a student may be brought before his or her college’s Academic Conduct Committee and may face academic suspension or expulsion from the university” (Craig et al., 2010, p. 51). These consequences indicate to students that academic integrity is important; they are also the types of consequences that are typical and even expected for offenses of academic dishonesty. Further, another consequence that may not occur to high school students in particular, is how their behavior can affect their admission into higher

education (Gardiner, 2001). These students who are aiming to go to college may not realize that their actions in school could have a negative impact on their acceptance to the university of their choice.

Disagreement on how much punishment is appropriate in any given instance of academic dishonesty exists within faculty and between students and faculty. One study found that “students expect [a] flexible approach by instructors like having probation or removing students from discussion forum instead of lowering their grades or points” (Toprak, Ozkanal, Aydin, & Kaya, 2010, p. 85). Conversely, faculty members believe “students do not attach the required importance to the online courses if they don’t get dissuasive punishments” (Toprak et al., 2010, p. 85). In other words, the consequences must be harsher in order to be effective in promoting the seriousness of academic dishonesty and discouraging students from cheating and plagiarizing.

Doling out punishment, especially for plagiarism, also depends on other factors. One study found that university professors felt consequences for plagiarism depend on how many offenses a student has. For example, a first offense would “be seen as an opportunity to educate the student” and would warrant a “meet[ing] with [the] student to remedy the problem; if not cleared up, then future action would be taken” (Robinson- Zañartu et al., 2005, p. 332). The same study found that the consequence also depends on the amount of plagiarized material—a larger amount would result in a harsher consequence such as failing the course (Robinson- Zañartu et al., 2005). Other punishments reported by teachers in this study can include a “report to the department chair …report to university judicial affairs,” probation, resubmitting the

assignment, or failing the course (Robinson-Zañartu et al., 2005, p. 332). But interestingly, 41 percent of the teachers surveyed in this study “indicated that no university sanction was warranted” in many situations (Robinson-Zañartu et al., 2005, p. 332).

Findings like these, however, may be generalizing the actual opinions of professors. For example, no definite agreement exists on “judgments of appropriate/inappropriate paraphrases” or how severe an instance of plagiarism is, and these variations cause big differences in similar cases “across campuses, departments, and even among faculty members, in some cases leading to unwarranted and spurious sanctions” (Robinson-Zañartu et al., 2005, p. 332). These findings reveal that although educators believe that academic dishonesty is a serious offense, they do not wish to over-punish their students. However, they do again call into question whether or not the “rules” regarding academic dishonesty are completely understood by anyone (Robinson-Zañartu et al., 2005, p. 333). Choosing appropriate consequences for each offense is extremely important because of the implications that the consequences can have. Too little punishment encourages students to cheat or plagiarize because they feel that the benefits, or the chances of getting caught, outweigh the risks. On the other hand, too much punishment discourages the student, turning them off to learning. As a solution to this, Robinson-Zañartu et al. (2005) suggests that more consistency across the many academic integrity policies is needed, even though oftentimes the course of action is at the discretion of the teacher.

Despite the fact that these honor codes are in place and the instructors seem to be concerned about this issue, taking no action against academic dishonesty commonly occurs; a portion of this is due to it going undetected. Without the use of technological detection tools,

teachers report that “it [is] impossible to know all the Web pages at once... it [is] not easy to catch the students all the time” (Ma et al., 2008, p. 200). As a result, students “take risks to cheat because the odds of getting caught [are] low” (Ma et al., 2008, p. 200). Also, teachers who do not use detection tools are essentially encouraging their students’ academic dishonesty.

One survey of 4,500 high school students in face to face classes further proves that all instructors may not be committed to punishing students for academic honesty, in order to get closer to ending it altogether. In 2001, Stricherz found that “47% of students believe teachers sometimes elect not to confront students they know are cheating ... [and] of those students, 26% believed that teachers did not want to go to the trouble of reporting suspected academic dishonesty” (para. 3). Alarmingly, some teachers do not want to be bothered with setting an example of upholding a high level of academic integrity for their students, but this is even worse when the students are aware of it. As a result, the students “found that there was no immediate consequence for them if they cheated occasionally” (Ma et al., 2008, p. 200), therefore giving them no reason to stop. Instructors of online courses who do not punish students for cheating and plagiarizing are part of the reason that academic dishonesty has reached epidemic levels and is still increasing. Without consequences, students are encouraged to behave dishonestly and the belief that academic integrity is ‘no big deal’ will be prolonged. Educators must be proactive in fighting academic dishonesty and promoting only the highest level of academic standards for their students.

Individual educational institutions must also strive to improve and maintain the status of academic integrity at their school. Yang and Gaskill (2011) reported that “accreditation agencies

continue to pressure institutions that offer distance education to ensure academic integrity” (p. 3421). If institutions do not meet these requirements, they could encounter problems when attempting to gain or renew accreditation, or establish a poor reputation among institutional counterparts (Shyles, 2002). The International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) and Rutland Institute for Ethics at Clemson University is an organization that serves as a resource for institutions to avoid these consequences. ICAI is “a forum to identify, affirm, and promote the values of academic integrity among students, faculty, teachers and administrators,” and share “the Center’s collective experience, expertise, and creative energy… [about] successful policies, enforcement procedures, sanctions, research, curricular materials, and education/prevention programs” (www.academicintegrity.org, About Us section). Their website also provides links to online versions of academic integrity policies for a number of colleges, universities and a few high schools that are members of the Center.

The ideal situation would be for consequences and punishments for academic dishonesty to be unnecessary. When paired with superb academic integrity policies, consequences are one of the best tools educators have to prevent academic dishonesty from happening, yet instances of academic dishonesty are slipping through the cracks and prolonging the problem.

Florida Virtual School Survey Results

The FLVS survey provides real examples of consequences that were implemented for instances of academic integrity. Item 11, which is also discussed in Chapter 4, asks teachers to describe both an incidence of academic dishonesty and the consequences that followed.

It seems as though the severity of the consequence increases based on the number of offenses a particular student has. A number of teachers used students' first offense as an opportunity to show the student what was wrong and how to avoid academic dishonesty in the future; however, this usually still results in a reduced grade with resubmission, and a referral to the Academic Integrity team at FLVS. The following are real accounts of using incidences of academic dishonesty as teachable moments:

- “I educate them then have them resubmit the assignment.”
- “I used it as an opportunity to teach him that this was very wrong, and could cause loss of a course. He was honest about it, and he actually turned in better, well planned items in the rest of the course. He was happy that I did not turn him in, but that I gave him a chance with the understanding that if it happened again he would be punished at a higher level. Mom was also involved in the process.”
- “I talk to student and guardian; we discuss student's understanding of what cheating is, why students shouldn't do it, document conversation in school records, provide modified or alternate assignments for partial credit; the majority of the time it's a learning experience for student.”

- “We discussed what it means to plagiarize...and I explained that if he needed help with an assignment in the future to call me and I would talk him through the assignment and expectations.”
- “We were able to use it as a learning experience and discussed ways to gain ideas, but to make sure that all work is in his own words after gathering information from his coursework, discussions with others, and other resources.”
- “I used it as a learning opportunity and taught them how to properly cite sources.”

Other consequences that the FLVS English teachers reported include:

- “A formal AI [Academic Integrity] ticket was written and the student was not allowed to make-up the essay since this was his 2nd AI offense.”
- “Student who stole the work could redo the work for 50% credit, student who "lent" the flash drive could earn a maximum of an 80% on the assessment.”
- “The students/parents were called and it was reported to our Academic Integrity team. At that point, all tests were proctored and many more discussion based assessments were given with no prior warning.”
- “[We] document [the] conversation in school records, provide modified or alternate assignments for partial credit.”
- “Multiple integrity violations could result in a proctored exam and/or expulsion.”

- “I contacted parents and the Academic Integrity department. The AI department puts the student into their database for future reference in case of future plagiarizing. The student was given only partial credit for original work.”
- “I submitted notice to my Academic Integrity team and he was given half credit for work but actually ended up withdrawing from the class.”
- “I awarded her a zero, put in my comments that my records indicated plagiarism, and spoke with her and mom on the phone about appropriate work. I offered her a chance to revise and resubmit her assignment.”
- “Resubmission of a new response to the assignment with the possibility of only earning 50% credit the 2nd time.”
- “It is caught by me or by turnitin.com and then it is turned in as an AI infraction. If it is the first time that a student has been caught, I talk with the parent and student. The student is then allowed to re-do the assignment for partial credit. If it is the second time the student has been caught, the grade remains a zero.”
- “She received a zero on that question, and she had to complete an Academic Integrity lesson. This incident was her first and was logged in her file in case of future issues.”
- “We just had a student removed completely from FLVS for this reason. She plagiarized in my course and a variety of others, and that was that - she's gone. Too many offenses to be acceptable at FLVS. The organization takes it VERY seriously.”
- “If it was a first offence, the AI team lets the student redo the lesson at up to 70% credit.”

These responses indicate how institutions such as FLVS are committed to promoting academic integrity and effectively use an honor code to dictate consequences for students' academic dishonesty. As illustrated in the literature, not all institutions have this same commitment, which is how academic dishonesty can become common in online learning environments. Chapter 7 will discuss, in depth, methods of preventing cheating and plagiarizing in online education.

CHAPTER 7: PREVENTING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY IN ONLINE EDUCATION

As in the previous chapters, the knowledge on this topic can be applied to both the traditional setting and the web-based setting. The literature reveals six categories in which prevention methods fall, although many of them overlap with both each other, and with topics discussed in previous chapters. These categories include interaction with students, informing students, technological prevention, altering assignments, choosing sources, and using peers. Prevention is emphasized because it is the closest there is to a solution to the problem. If prevention were more successful, a majority of other topics that surround academic dishonesty, including those discussed in previous chapters, would essentially be irrelevant. Educators should be aiming to end academic dishonesty with prevention, despite the way that it is manifested.

Literature Review

Interaction with Students

Prevention can be accomplished by interacting with students both individually and as a whole class. Online teachers can use these interactions for a variety of reasons including to gain students' thoughts on academic dishonesty and to make the students aware of the instructors' thoughts on academic dishonesty. These exchanges are an opportunity to ensure that "there is absolutely no question as to what does or does not constitute plagiarism" (Baron, & Crooks,

2005, p. 43). This interaction also aims to establish relationships with students to further deter them from cheating and plagiarizing which could eliminate one of the common reasons that students decide to cheat in online courses—lack of interaction with the instructor. Additionally, online instructors can use these opportunities to discuss individual student work. These conversations can be more effective at the very start of an online class, but also throughout the duration of the course.

The beginning of an online course is a good opportunity to initially discuss academic dishonesty using chat rooms, discussion posts, or recorded audio from the teacher which students can respond to. Thomas and Sassi (2011) suggest goals and provisions for this conversation:

- 1) “...highlight ways in which academic dishonesty can be expressed (different forms)” (p. 51).
- 2) “Language addressing values and morals can be inflammatory—it is important to keep emotions out as much as possible and yet sometimes it is important to dramatize strong feelings” (p. 51).
- 3) Find out: “Do students care? To what extent and about what? Getting caught—or?” (p. 51).
- 4) Establish “an acceptable shared ethical position” (p. 49).

Other researchers add to this list by suggesting that “faculty should clearly indicate their position on academic dishonesty” (Baron & Crooks, 2005, p. 42), and that teachers should “clarify expectations for students” (McCabe & Pavela, 2004, p. 14).

Throughout the duration of the course, keeping continuous contact with each student is important so that they establish a relationship with their teacher and are less inclined to engage in academic dishonesty. For example, Sterngold (2004) suggests that online instructors “meet with students to discuss their research” (p. 19). In online classes, this could be done by setting up ‘virtual’ appointments with each student to discuss how their projects are progressing, to motivate them or discuss problems they are having, and give them suggestions so they do not feel that they need to plagiarize. Similarly, online instructors can set up virtual appointments after they submit their assignment in which online instructors should “ensure feedback is specific, meaningful and respects student feelings /functioning to build confidence” (Gourlay & Greig, 2007, p. 18). It may seem implausible for one teacher to meet with all students before, during, and after all assignments which can be why students often report that the sense of distance from their online instructor contributes to their decision to cheat or plagiarize. To help eliminate this, Weller (2002) suggests assigning each student a tutor or teaching assistant who can provide individual attention and assess student work. The tutors or teaching assistants can help to fill in the lack of interaction that students feel in web-based courses, and gives students an opportunity to have more individualized attention.

Informing Students

By interacting with students, online teachers become more aware of their students' knowledge and attitude about academic dishonesty, and know what issues to address and correct. Oftentimes, online instructors will find that their students are not particularly knowledgeable about academic dishonesty and how to properly research and cite material. This may be frustrating to teachers because it is difficult for them to understand how students have not previously learned these skills. Spaulding (2009) asserts that, despite their frustration, "it is important for faculty to understand the differences in their own perceptions of academic dishonesty and the perceptions of their students because these perceptions influence behavior" (p. 185). When students sense that they do not have these skills, they try to avoid them altogether and copy a whole, completed written document off the Internet. Educators now have the job of teaching students these skills, no matter what grade level.

Simply put, Ma et al. (2008) says, "teach students how to document sources" (p. 201). Although this certainly must be done, teachers should not neglect informing students about other ways to avoid academic dishonesty as well. Online teachers should provide instruction on the correct way to paraphrase, and on the institution's academic integrity policy/honor code. This is effective because honor codes make consequences consistent among classes, students, and situations (Satterlee, 2002), and "Academic Integrity Policies and/or Honor Codes simply and effectively reduce academic dishonesty" (Baron & Crooks, 2005, p. 42). Further, Spaulding (2009) reports findings on students' knowledge of their school's honor code:

52% percent indicated that they obtained integrity information from the institutions website while nearly 48% indicated that they did not. Additionally, nearly 8% indicated that they did not obtain integrity information from their instructor. Nearly 6% indicated having ‘very little’ or ‘no’ knowledge of the academic integrity policy. (p. 195-196)

Online educators can pair instruction on honor codes with informing students of the consequences of cheating and plagiarizing to deter them from doing it. Students should know that there are measures in place that will detect when they attempt to cheat or plagiarize and that it will be difficult to get away with; this will “eliminate[e] many of the incentives to cheat” (Sterngold, 2004, p. 18). Also, discussion on honor codes addresses the larger issue of students’ lax ethical position on academic integrity (see Chapter 3). Finally, emphasizing with students that the Internet is a great source of information and knowledge is important, but it must be used correctly. Instructors must “help students understand the potential of the Internet—and how that potential can be lost if online resources are used for fraud, theft, and deception” (McCabe & Pavela, 2004, p. 13).

Technological Prevention

Similar to how technology is helpful in detecting academic dishonesty, it can be used to prevent it as well. The literature suggested many uses for technology to help educate students, to

allow students to prevent themselves from cheating and plagiarizing, and to better monitor students. Online modules, for example, are tools that cover many aspects of prevention. Online modules have been created for students to complete which inform them about academic dishonesty and academic integrity (Fricker, Armstrong, & Carty, 2003). These modules can inform students about what constitutes academic dishonesty, the resources they can use, how to properly document sources, their institution's honor code, and what types of detection methods are used if they try to cheat or plagiarize.

Technology can also be used differently in order to help online students learn from their own mistakes. In his article, "Wikipedia Tops List of Plagiarized Sources," David Nagel (2011) suggests "using plagiarism detection in a formative manner to allow students to see where their references are improperly cited and to make those corrections before the final paper is submitted" (A Call to Action section). One website that allows students to do this is PlagiarismDetect.com. This site is similar to other plagiarism detection sites but "instead of serving as a site for cheating, the purpose of the service is to help students identify plagiarism and deal with the issue before submitting an academic paper" (Pearson, 2011, p. 55). Teachers can require students to submit their work to this site as "part of classroom procedure" (Pearson, 2011, p. 55). This system would be most beneficial to students who are honestly trying to avoid plagiarism, and will serve as a trial-and-error learning process.

Other technological prevention methods are based on restricting what computers can access when students are using them. Ma et al. (2008) has suggested that "blocking, filtering, and rating systems" can be used (p. 201). Other more advanced methods include tracking

students “by their IP address, or computer geographic locale, after they are suspected of cheating by faculty” (Lanier, 2007, p. 256). Software programs can also be used to prevent students from using other sources of information when completing assignments or exams. Securexam is a computer program which “locks down Microsoft Word in such a way that the user is unable to access ANY resources on the computer, except for the MS Word program” including “the Internet, or any local files” (Lecher, 2005, p. 181). This safeguard allows the online instructor to be sure that the student is not using any other electronic sources on that computer but it does not prevent students from using other devices, written materials such as textbooks, or other people. There are other methods to address these issues, however. Carnevale (1999) proposes using a webcam that can “send the professor a stream of images of the student taking a test or discussing issues” (Click Here for the Exam Cam section, para.1). This would allow online teachers the ability to see if students are using other written sources, devices, or people. But perhaps the most secure way to administer an exam for a web-based course is requiring students to take all exams in a testing center so that it may be proctored (Carnevale, 1999). In this case, online students would report to a local testing center and log into the course to take the exam; instructors would be sure that the student was not using any outside sources during the exam.

In analysis of this literature, it becomes apparent that a single technological safeguard is not enough to prevent cheating and plagiarizing, but if used in conjunction with one another, the ability to prevent academic dishonesty through technology is powerful.

Altering Assignments

Hinman (2000) proposes that educators need to decrease the number of opportunities students have to cheat; many scholars feel that this can be done, for plagiarism especially, by changing how online instructors create assignments. A significant amount of research on prevention (Baron & Crooks, 2005; Chiesl, 2007; Duke University, 1999; Gibelman, Gelman, & Fast, 1999; Gourlay & Greig, 2007; Ma et al., 2008; Olt, 2002; Sterngold, 2004;) suggests a number of ways in which assignments can be altered so that they are essentially “plagiarism proof” (Gourlay & Greig, 2007, p. 17). A list of tips and strategies to accomplish this follows:

- 1) Make assignments “current and /or personalized” so that there will not be pre-written papers on those topics (Gourlay & Greig, 2007, p. 17).
- 2) Encourage students by “includ[ing] in the guidelines positive reminders about sources, academic conventions and good student academic conduct / practice” (Gourlay & Greig, 2007, p. 17).
- 3) Focus on specific learning goals such as “reading a text for argument; applying a scientific concept to an actual situation; [and] interpreting a set of data for a purpose” (<http://www.thinkingwriting.qmul.ac.uk/>, Using Short Writing Tasks section).
- 4) A task should require students to produce “...a small amount of writing from a large amount of thinking” (<http://www.thinkingwriting.qmul.ac.uk/>, Using Short Writing Tasks section).

- 5) “Break up major research papers into smaller assignments” in order to “monitor students’ progress, provide timely feedback and advice, and identify problems before they become last minute crises” (Sterngold, 2004, p. 18).
- 6) “Require students to write about course-specific topics” with “specific research questions” so that students cannot find general research papers online about common topics (Sterngold, 2004, p. 18).
- 7) “Incorporate assignments into class discussions and tests” (Sterngold, 2004, p. 19).
- 8) Require students to submit pieces of their work as they go through the writing process (Olt, 2002).
- 9) “Set clear guidelines for assignments and for evaluating student work,” and ensure “fair and accurate evaluation” for original work (Duke University, 1999, p. 6-7).

Combining these tips and strategies can drastically decrease the amount of plagiarism in online courses. But aside from simply “involve[ing] students in interesting assignments” (Ma et al., 2008, p. 201), scholars provide some general guidelines for preventing plagiarism. First, Baron and Crooks (2005) suggests cutting down the amount of writing in general and giving “assessment in the form of a project” (p. 43). If students have to produce something that is other than either written work or answers to test questions, teachers can feel better about its originality. In the web-based setting, this could be in the form of a community service project, for example. A second guideline is to avoid giving the same assignments every term (Gibelman, Gelman, & Fast, 1999). This would prevent students from sharing written work with student who have previously taken the course with the same instructor.

A few methods to prevent cheating by altering online assessments exist aside from those discussed in the technological prevention section. When instructors create online exams and quizzes, there are a variety of options to choose from. Chiesl (2007) has developed a set of provisions for creating online exams that do not lend themselves to cheating. He suggests creating exams that: have the “tightest time frame possible for students to complete,” allow students to only see one question at a time, do not allow students to go back to prior questions, are available to take for a week, have a “low point value... say, 5% of the total semester points for each exam,” and allow students unlimited attempts at exams but each time with different randomized questions covering multiple chapters (Chiesl, 2007, p. 206-207). Finally, Chiesl (2007) suggests increasing the number of exams per term.

Choosing Sources

Similar to giving students specific assignments, scholars advise online instructors to be specific when choosing reference materials as well. Sterngold (2004) proposes “choos[ing] some required source material for your students” which allows the teacher to be familiar with a smaller set of sources (p. 19); this makes it easier for the online instructor to detect plagiarism by eliminating the need to search the Internet for the many documents that their students could have pulled from. As another option, online instructors can “require students to submit printouts of source materials” of their choice (Sterngold, 2004, p. 20). In this method, online instructors can

still become familiar with the sources that their students are using and can “quickly find relevant materials and determine if they were plagiarized” (Sterngold, 2004, p. 20). In both of these methods, it would be extremely risky for a student to plagiarize written work, therefore deterring them from doing so (Sterngold, 2004). Further, instructors can make their students aware of tools that will help them cite the sources that they choose; “citation generators” allow students to insert information about their sources which is then used to automatically produce the correct citation (Pearson, 2011, p. 58).

Using Peers

A small portion of the literature suggests that one method to prevent academic dishonesty is using peers and /or classmates. Two main uses for peers emerged; the first is using the work of some students as an example to others. To do this, Ma et al. (2008) suggests “compliment[ing] model behaviors such as showcasing students’ original writings or evidence of creative thinking” (p. 201-202). A second way to use peers to prevent plagiarism and cheating was briefly touched on previously, and that is having students band together in a pact against academic dishonesty (Kolowich, 2011). Oftentimes students engage in academic dishonesty because their peers are, but by the same token, if students’ peers are not engaging in academic dishonesty, they will not either.

This chapter has detailed the various approaches that can be taken towards preventing academic dishonesty. Educators have come to terms with the fact that no one “particular method will completely resolve these issues, but there are many steps to be taken that will mitigate these issues” (Lecher, 2005, p. 180). Now that educators have all of these approaches, our focus must be on successfully implementing them, because without ensuring academic honesty, we cannot move forward and “place value and meaning [on] an institution’s scholarship and degrees” (Duke University, 1999, p. 6).

Florida Virtual School Survey Results

Item 6 of the survey is completely dedicated to gaining information on how FLVS English teachers prevent academic dishonesty. The 25 responses to this item provide the strategies that are currently utilized at the secondary level.

As discussed in the Interactions with Students section in the literature review portion of this chapter, a number of the respondents use the strategy of having a conversation with students in order to emphasize the seriousness and importance of possessing academic integrity. The teachers say that they “speak to them about it in a welcome call and make sure [to] bring it up multiple times when [they] speak to them;” “always discuss what academic integrity is and why it is important at the beginning of the class;” “review the policies and procedures to students about plagiarizing at the beginning of the course;” and “emphasize integrity … throughout their time in the course.” Similarly, many respondents report using technological tools as well.

Turnitin.com is heavily relied on to prevent students from plagiarizing; it is mentioned in 9 out of 25 responses.

A variety of the other prevention strategies discussed in this chapter were also mentioned. Some respondents mentioned giving support, feedback, altering assignments, choosing sources, and instruction on academic integrity. Examples include, “support[ing] students...available for them quickly so that they feel like they can ask for help right away;” “personalizing instruction; relationship building;” “providing adequate resources to help students understand the material...trying to maintain a close working relationship;” “work[ing] with students to help them understand the lesson/assignment and to guide them to appropriate resources;” “prais[ing] them for their creative authentic work;” and using “Discussion Based Assessments which are coupled with strategies to connect with submitted work.”

Overall, these responses to survey item 6 indicate that secondary teachers at the FLVS are aware of, and put into practice, good strategies for prevention as were described in the literature. As more tools for prevention are created and discovered, the environment of academically honest online education will expand.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

The aim of this study was to gain knowledge on academic dishonesty in the online learning environment at the secondary level through both a literature review and a survey of Florida Virtual School English teachers. In this process, a variety of aspects and subtopics of academic dishonesty were analyzed in order to create a broad picture of the problem as it is applicable to online learning. Through this analysis, a variety of findings surfaced. In almost all cases, the results from the survey of FLVS teachers were consistent with the findings reported in the literature. A summary of the new findings from the survey follows:

- The majority of students enroll in online courses to make up credits from failing a class in brick and mortar schools.
- The FLVS teachers feel that students cheat or plagiarize in online classes because it is easy to do so with all of the online resources they have access to.
- Turnitin.com is the most commonly used tool for prevention and detection.
- Lack of face to face interaction plays a large role in why students decide to cheat or plagiarize.
- The majority of students take academic dishonesty “slightly seriously.”
- Cheating or plagiarizing occurs “somewhat often” in online classes.
- Teachers perceive that only “some” of cheating and plagiarizing is accidental.

This summary represents the responses that were most frequently selected or reported.

Additionally, one overall new finding from comparing both the literature review and the FLVS survey results was that academic dishonesty in online education is not vastly different from academic dishonesty in face to face classrooms; therefore, academic dishonesty in the online environment is not as much of a mystery as typically assumed. The survey did, however, expand the knowledge about online academic dishonesty at the secondary level, and specifically in the English Language Arts content area. Further, although new information was discovered, the findings cannot definitively represent the current status and prominence of academic dishonesty in the online learning environment in comparison to the face to face environment.

Finally, the reliance and emphasis on technology can be seen as an indication of the continued growth of online education. As seen in the example of FLVS, students have created a high demand for more educational opportunities in web-based distance education. As a result, the issue of online academic dishonesty will continue to be present; however, if efforts to prevent and detect cheating and plagiarizing persist, online education will advance while academic dishonesty becomes an issue of the past.

Future Research

Conduct the same study using students at FLVS. Comparisons between the students' and teachers' perceptions of academic integrity in secondary online English education could be made to add to the growing understanding of this topic.

Expand subject area. The specificity of subject area could be lifted so that a more general picture of both student and instructor perceptions on the subject of academic integrity in online education at the secondary level could be established.

APPENDIX A: FLVS SURVEY

1. I have read the Informed Consent document in the email, and agree to be a part of this research study on Academic Integrity in Secondary Online English Education.

Yes, I agree.

No, I do not agree.

2. What course(s) and grade level(s) do you teach? How long have you been teaching this/these online course(s) and grade level(s)?
3. Why do you think students take online classes rather than face-to-face classes?

Students could not fit the class in their schedule at school.

Students are making up credits due to failing a class in school.

Students feel that online classes are easier.

Students are filling a state requirement.

Going to face-to-face classes doesn't fit into a work schedule.

Students simply wish to stay at home and learn.

Other, please specify.

4. Why do you feel students cheat or plagiarize in online classes?

It is easy to cheat with all of the online resources students have access to.

There is a lot of temptation to cheat or plagiarize.

Students perceive that other students are cheating and plagiarizing.

Students feel that there is less chance of getting caught.

Students do not have face-to-face interaction with the instructor.

Students are not being monitored.

Other, please specify.

5. Do you think cheating and plagiarizing online differs from face-to-face? If so, how?
6. How do you try to prevent cheating and plagiarizing in your online class?
7. How do you detect cheating and plagiarizing in your online class?
8. How seriously do you think your students take cheating and plagiarizing?

Not seriously at all

Not too seriously

Neutral

Slightly seriously

Very seriously

9. How often does cheating and plagiarizing occur in your online class?

Never

Rarely

Neutral

Somewhat often

Very often

N/A

10. To what degree do you think this cheating and plagiarizing is accidental?

None of it

Some of it

Neutral

A good amount of it

All of it

11. Please describe an incidence of cheating or plagiarizing that has occurred in your class
and how was it dealt with. Remove any names or specifics.

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



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: Dr. Susan Wegmann and Marissa K Middleton

Date: December 22, 2011

Dear Researcher:

On 12/22/2011, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: UCF Initial Review Submission Form
Project Title: An Examination of Academic Integrity in Secondary Online English Education
Investigator: Dr. Susan Wegmann
IRB Number: SBE-11-08106
Funding Agency: None

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 Janice Turchin on 12/22/2011 01:09:37 PM EST

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janice Turchin".

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX C: UCF IRB TITLE CHANGE APPROVAL LETTER



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: Dr. Susan Wegmann and Co-PI: Marissa K. Middleton

Date: March 14, 2012

Dear Researcher:

On 03/14/2012, the IRB approved the following minor modification to human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Modification Type: The study title has been revised from: An Examination of Academic Integrity in Secondary Online English Education TO An Examination of Academic Dishonesty in Secondary Online English Education.
Project Title: An Examination of Academic Dishonesty in Secondary Online English Education
Investigator: Dr. Susan Wegmann
IRB Number: SBE-11-08106
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 03/14/2012 04:56:48 PM EST

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

IRB Coordinator

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