

Academic Misconduct: Student Beliefs and Behaviors at a HBCU

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to measure the beliefs and behaviors, concerning academic dishonesty, of students at a Historically Black University (HBCU) located in the Southern United States. A literature review suggests that there is no existing work showing a similar study at a HBCU. Our primary goals are to detail student beliefs and behaviors, and to then better understand the relationship between student beliefs about academic misconduct and their own behaviors. This study uses sixteen questions, measuring various academic misconduct actions, previously asked of students enrolled at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Our paper then, in part, compares the findings from the PWI survey to those from our HBCU survey. In addition, our work compares student self reported beliefs to their self reported behaviors. Our data indicate that there is incongruence between beliefs and behaviors; students are more likely to take part in misconduct actions than their reported beliefs indicate.

Keywords: *Academic Misconduct, HBCU, student beliefs, behaviors*

INTRODUCTION

Academic misconduct, such as cheating on tests, plagiarizing term papers, and submitting other people's work as original has garnered much attention in the academic literature. Although not restricted to institutions of higher education, the topic of academic dishonesty at the college level has generated a vast amount of work over the last fifty years. Payne and Nantz report that research on academic misconduct has occurred as early as 1941 (1994, p. 2) and Shipley cites work from a 1964 study by Bowers (1964) that found that at least one-half of the students surveyed on 99 campuses reported cheating (2009, p. 40). From student and faculty perceptions (Wilkinson, 2009; Hard, Conway, & Moran, 2006) to studies targeting specific majors and colleges, such as Journalism (Shipley, 2009), Business (Iyer & Eastman, 2006), and Information Technology (Sheard, Markham, & Dick, 2003), scholars have looked at the phenomenon from the United Kingdom (Selwyn, 2008), Turkey (Tas & Tekkaya, 2010), Australia (Wilkinson, 2009), and the United States. Predicting behavior and attitudes (Culwin, 2006; Whitley, 1998) by isolating social (Zimny, Robertson, & Bartoszek, 2008), and psychological (Jordan, 2001) covariates and applying econometric (Bisping, Patron, & Roskelley, 2008) and multidimensional scaling techniques (Schmelkin, Gilbert, Spencer, & Pincus, 2008) serve as the focus of some researchers, while others concentrate on case study methodology (Stephens & Nicholson, 2008) to better understand the context within which students cheat.

Background Literature

According to Shipley the level of cheating differs by college major (2009, p. 40), and Crammer, Ethers, and Finn note that there is a relationship between student orientation towards learning or grades and attitudes concerning cheating, with those oriented toward learning more likely to have harsher attitudes about cheating (2006, p. 135). Further, Shipley cites Bowers' (1964), findings that college peers are suspected to have the greatest influence on student's attitudes toward cheating (2009, p. 40). To complicate matters, however, Crammer et al., point out that students may be confused about what constitutes plagiarism and the status of other academic short-cuts (2006, p.

135). As noted in the introduction, there are many models of academic misconduct, each postulating a varied set of predictor variables.

In addition, academic dishonesty is defined in many ways and encompasses many activities. Some researchers identify academic dishonesty as cheating (Niiya, Ballantyne, North, & Crocker 2008; Etter, 2006), while others (Stone, Jawahar, & Kisamore, 2009; Hard et al., 2006) take a broader approach and include plagiarism, data falsification, and other forms of misconduct, as well. In this research, a wide range of activities, as used by Hard et al. (2006), are included under the label of academic misconduct. The sixteen questions used to measure student beliefs and behaviors are replicated from the study by Hard et al. (2006) at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). The research of Hard et al. (2006) is based on the relationship between personal beliefs and the behavior of peers. There is a body of work that shows that individual beliefs are consistent with perceived peer behavior, and Hard et al. show that "students considerably overestimated the frequency of peer's misconduct" (2006, p. 1076). But what is the relationship between individual beliefs and behaviors? As Stephens and Nicholson discuss, "there are numerous studies in the literature indicating that many students experience belief-behavior incongruity specifically in the domain of academic dishonesty" (2008, p. 636). This incongruity can lead to moral disengagement, or the use of what Stephens and Nicholson call "neutralization devices [that] obscure or even negate one's personal agency by attributing responsibility for one's conduct to others" (2008, p. 636).

Although Crammer et al., find that students at a church affiliated school are likely to rate misconduct as more serious than students at a larger research university, gender might be a confounding variable (2006, p. 149). Nevertheless, the findings of Crammer et al., (2006) serve as a point of interest. Is it possible that religion might play a role in the formation of student beliefs and behaviors when it comes to academic misconduct? Hill investigates the interaction between college life and religious beliefs and states that "religion only works as a deterrent to deviant behavior when the community upholds the religious justifications" (2009, p. 517). Hill expects that in a closed community, such as students in college, "religious life will be more salient" (2009, p. 517). In addition, Bryant (2003) posits that "students may become increasingly committed to spiritual matters during college" (p. 3), and found that there was a greater "commitment to integrate spirituality into their lives" (p. 6) over the course of one year. Directly informing this research, Hill relates that although students who attend HBCUs have moderately lower levels of religious participation, than students at religious schools, i.e., Bible colleges, their participation rate is considerably higher than that of students at nonreligious public and private schools (2009, p. 523). Table 2 shows our student responses to two questions about their religiosity. Over eighty percent identify themselves as *Very* or *Somewhat* religious, and approximately one-third report attending church service at least weekly.

Although there is no direct support in the literature, this research is built upon the conjecture that the role of religious belief is strong at HBCUs and that a robust sense of moral community will possibly temper the academic misconduct beliefs and behaviors of students.

PURPOSE

After examining the literature, one question that comes to mind is, do students at different types of institutions have varying attitudes toward academic dishonesty? Thus, these authors have found only one study conducted exclusively at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) (Qwunwanne, Rustagi, & Dada, 2010). Furthermore, although Qwunwanne et al., (2010) looked at academic dishonesty at Howard University, the study targeted students enrolled in the college of Business, exclusively, and did not cross academic disciplines.

This research looks at student self reports of beliefs and behaviors concerning academic dishonesty. It takes its lead, in part, from a study (Hard et al, 2006) conducted at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Our study borrows from the PWI study by asking the same set of questions, about academic misconduct, to students at a HBCU. Our research is focused on three central questions that we strive to answer with our questionnaire data.

First, we measure HBCU student attitudes and beliefs concerning academic misconduct. We ask about their beliefs and about their behaviors and report the univariate findings. Next, we compare the responses from students at the HBCU to the responses detailed by Hard et al. (2006) of students from a PWI. We are curious to see if self reports of behavior concerning academic misconduct from students at a HBCU differ from students at the PWI. Finally, and secondary to the descriptive findings, we then compare the self reports of beliefs and behaviors at the HBCU to determine if there a difference between student perceptions of honest behavior and their actual behavior.

METHODOLOGY

Two surveys (Form 1, Form 2) were administered concurrently to approximately four-hundred and seventy undergraduate students at a HBCU located in the Southern United States. Approval from the university's Institutional Review Board was gained prior to implementing the survey. Students enrolled in university developmental and core curriculum classes during the Fall term of 2011 were asked to voluntarily participate in the study. Because of the voluntary nature of the survey, responses were not tracked and response rates not calculated. Informal observation indicates that the vast majority of students completed the survey, with only a few students leaving the classrooms during survey administration. The courses selected enroll predominantly first and second year students from all majors.

The survey included items borrowed from an earlier study (Hard et al, 2006) that asks students to rate sixteen academic misconduct behaviors. This research differs, however, from that of Hard et al, (2006) by using a split-form design. The split-form pre-experimental design is used to allow comparison of the two groups. Thus, one-half of the students are asked to rate their *beliefs* concerning each item, while the other half are asked to rate their *behaviors*. The two survey forms are stacked in alternating fashion and then distributed to students in classrooms. In total there are 237 completed Form 1 surveys and 241 of Form 2. Survey Form 1 measures student beliefs, while Form 2 measures student behaviors. On both forms the scale runs from -5 to 5. On the *Beliefs* form, the scale goes from -5 (Completely Unacceptable Behavior) to +5 (Completely Acceptable Behavior) with 0 (Not Really Acceptable but Not Unacceptable, Either) in the middle. On the *Behaviors* form it goes from -5 (Would Never Consider It) to +5 (Have Done It Many Times) with 0 (Might Consider It, But Never have Done It) in the middle.

The questions run the range from minor infractions such as "Realizing during an exam that another student wants to copy from your paper, and allowing that student to copy" to the more serious "Buying papers for the purpose of turning them in as your own work." Demographic information was also collected. Once these data are collected, they are entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analyses. Univariate and means test procedures are performed on these data to test for differences between student beliefs and behaviors. The wording for the sixteen questions that measure student beliefs and behaviors are displayed at the end of this *Methodology* section..

Before analyzing the belief and behavior responses, we first compared the two groups to see how closely they matched on basic demographic and student attributes. Tables 1 and 2 show that the two groups (Form 1 – Beliefs, Form 2 – Behaviors) are comparable in their composition.

Table 1: Comparison of Student Attributes

Class Rank*	Form 1	Form 2
Freshman	53.20%	48.50%
Sophomore	32.80%	36.90%
Junior	6.40%	6.90%
Senior	7.70%	7.70%
Mean GPA*	2.97	2.90
Mean Age*	22.34	22.72

*Not Significant at the .01 level

In terms of class rank, the two groups have a very similar response distribution and a Chi-Square test does not allow us to reject the null hypothesis of no difference between the two samples at the .01 level. Likewise, the mean GPA and mean Age differences do not generate a sufficiently small probability to reject the null hypothesis of no difference at the .01 level.

Table 2: Comparison of Demographic Variables

How Religious*	Form 1	Form 2
Very	33.10%	32.50%
Somewhat	52.10%	52.60%
A Little	12.30%	12.80%
Not At All	2.50%	2.10%
Church Attendance*	Form 1	Form 2
Daily	1.70%	3.00%
Weekly	36.10%	32.20%
Monthly	21.90%	22.90%
Several Times A Year	17.60%	22.50%
Rarely	19.30%	17.80%
Never	3.40%	1.70%

*Not Significant at the .01 level

Table 2 compares the two groups on two religion oriented questions; how religious the students consider her/him-self and church attendance and, again, the differences are not statistically significant at the .01 level. We do find a statistically significant difference at the .01 level in reported parental income (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison of Parental Income

Income*	Form 1	Form 2
\$15,000 or Less	20.60%	25.00%
\$15, 001 to \$30,000	26.80%	19.30%
\$30,001 to \$45,000	19.60%	15.30%
\$45,001 to \$60,000	15.50%	19.90%
\$60,001 to \$ 100,000	9.80%	17.00%
\$100,000+	7.70%	3.40%

*Significant at the .01 level

Seaman cautions us that “failing to find difference is not proof of similarity” (1998, p. 405). However, Seaman acknowledges that “some researchers attempt to demonstrate equivalence by showing that the traditional null hypothesis of no difference cannot be rejected” (1998, p. 405). Thus, although not the most rigorous test for similarity, for this first exploratory look, the authors are comfortable, overall, that the two samples are similar enough and move forward with comparing student beliefs and behaviors.

Below are the sixteen survey questions used in this study.

Q1 Planning in advance and then copying from another person's paper or receiving unauthorized aid from another person during an examination.

Q2 Not planning to, but copying from another person's paper or receiving unauthorized aid from another person during an examination.

Q3 Planning to and then using unauthorized materials or devices during an examination or any other form of academic evaluation and grading: for example, using signals, notes, books, or calculators during an examination when the instructor has not approved the instructor has not approved their use.

Q4 Not planning to, but using unauthorized materials or devices during an examination or any other form of academic evaluation and grading.

Q5 Planning to, and then allowing, another person to copy from your paper during an examination.

Q6 Realizing, during an exam, that another student wants to copy from your paper, and then allowing that

student to copy (or not preventing the student from copying).

Q7 Improperly acquiring or distributing examinations for example, stealing examinations before the test period or taking a copy of an examination from a testing room without the permission of the instructor.

Q8 Submitting another person's material as one's own for academic evaluation.

Q9 Preparing work for another student to submit for academic evaluation.

Q10 Working with another student on material to be submitted for academic evaluation when the instructor has not authorized working together.

Q11 Submitting the same work, or substantially similar work, in more than one course without prior consent of the evaluating instructors.

Q12 Using unauthorized materials or fabricated data in an unacceptable exercise: for example, falsifying data in a research paper or laboratory experiment.

Q13 Copying sentences, phrases, paragraphs, tables, figures or data directly or in slightly modified form from a book, article, or other academic source without using quotation marks or giving proper acknowledgments to the original author or source.

Q14 Copying information from Internet websites and submitting it as your own work.

Q15 Buying papers for the purpose of turning them in as your own work.

Q16 Selling or lending papers so another student can turn them in as his or her own work.

FINDINGS

The first procedure conducted is the calculation of the *Belief* response means. Table 4 shows the findings of this analysis by displaying the questions in rank order from smallest to largest mean. A mean of -5 is "Completely Unacceptable," while a mean of 5 is "Completely Acceptable." As the table shows, the three responses with the smallest means – or less unacceptable actions - are Question 8 "Submitting another person's material as one's own for academic evaluation" (-3.90), Question 7 "Improperly acquiring or distributing examinations for example, stealing examinations before the test period or taking a copy of an examination from a testing room without the permission of the instructor" (-3.87), and Question 1 "Planning in advance and then copying from another person's paper or receiving unauthorized aid from another person during an examination" (-3.59). Table 4 also shows the percent of *Completely Unacceptable* responses to each of the sixteen actions.

Table 4: Rank Order of Beliefs by Mean Score

Survey Question	^Mean Score Belief	% Responding Completely Unacceptable
Q8	-3.900	67.4
Q7	-3.870	69.2
Q1	-3.590	62.4
Q3	-3.560	62.6
Q14	-3.560	58.0
Q12	-3.550	56.1
Q15	-3.500	59.2
Q5	-3.330	54.9
Q9	-3.300	52.7
Q4	-3.290	55.6
Q13	-3.260	48.7
Q2	-3.220	53.6
Q6	-3.070	48.1
Q16	-2.980	51.7
Q11	-2.430	41.4
Q10	-1.210	23.1

^Scale ranges from -5 Completely Unacceptable to 5 Completely Acceptable

The three belief responses with the largest means – or more acceptable actions - are Question 16 "Selling or lending papers so another student can turn them in as his or her own work" (-2.98), Question 11 "Submitting the same

work, or substantially similar work, in more than one course without prior consent of the evaluating instructors” (-2.43), and Question 10 “Working with another student on material to be submitted for academic evaluation when the instructor has not authorized working together” (-1.21). These findings suggest that students tend to think that premeditated direct actions, e.g., planning on submitting someone else’s work, are less acceptable than spontaneous actions, or actions taken by someone else, e.g., letting someone copy their test. Question 10 can be attributed to the popular attitude of ‘if we are not told explicitly not to do something, then it must be alright.’

Table 5 shows a similar ranking of responses to the *Behavior* questions in that the order goes from smallest to largest mean. For behaviors, a mean of -5 is “Would Never Consider It,” while a mean of 5 is “Have Done It Often.” The three questions with the smallest mean – or less likely to be considered - are Question 15 “Buying papers for the purpose of turning them in as your own work” (-3.69), Question 8 “Submitting another person's material as one's own for academic evaluation” (-3.51), and Question 7 “Improperly acquiring or distributing examinations for example, stealing examinations before the test period or taking a copy of an examination from a testing room without the permission of the instructor” (-3.49). Table 5 also shows the percent of *Would Never Consider It* responses to each of the sixteen actions.

The three behavior responses with the largest mean - more likely to be considered - are Question 2 “Not planning to, but copying from another person's paper or receiving unauthorized aid from another person during an examination” (-1.54), Question 6 “Realizing, during an exam, that another student wants to copy from your paper, and then allowing that student to copy (or not preventing the student from copying)” (-1.26), and Question 10 “Working with another student on material to be submitted for academic evaluation when the instructor has not authorized working together” (-.069).

Table 5: Rank Order of Behaviors by Mean Score

Survey Question	^Mean Score Behavior	% Responding Completely Unacceptable
Q15	-3.690	67.8
Q8	-3.510	63.1
Q7	-3.490	63.9
Q12	-3.060	50.6
Q16	-3.020	55.3
Q9	-2.960	54.2
Q14	-2.420	44.2
Q11	-2.150	41.5
Q1	-1.920	39.1
Q13	-1.850	39.2
Q4	-1.730	37.6
Q3	-1.710	38.8
Q5	-1.700	36.1
Q2	-1.540	35.0
Q6	-1.260	31.5
Q10	-0.690	25.0

^Scale ranges from -5 Would Never Consider to 5 Done It many Times

It is interesting to note that not only do similar patterns emerge in terms of premeditated direct actions being less acceptable, but that two of the three most unacceptable beliefs and behaviors are the same. However, when looking at the tables, there does not appear to be an overall pattern in terms of the ranking of beliefs and behaviors. Question 8 “Submitting another person's material as one's own for academic evaluation” generates a mean of -3.90 as belief, and a behavior mean of -3.51 (this belief-behavior gap is addressed in the final section of this analysis). Question 10 “Working with another student on material to be submitted for academic evaluation when the instructor

has not authorized working together,” is the action that generates the largest mean as a belief and as a behavior (-1.21 and -.069, respectively) and is more acceptable as a behavior than as a belief.

For the next analysis, we compare the results of our survey to those of a study conducted at a PWI (Hard et al, 2006). In their study, Hard et al, (2006) asked respondents to report their own misconduct using a five point scale that ranged from 1: Never, to 5: Very Often for each of the sixteen misconduct actions. Hard et al, (2006) reported the means for each of the sixteen questions. On our survey, we use the Hard et al, (2006) actions, but ask our respondents to answer on a ten point scale that ranges from -5: Would Never Consider It to 5: Done It Many Times. The results of the comparison are shown in Table 6. In order to make this comparison, we transform the means from each study’s survey questions to a standardized format. We accomplish this transformation by mapping each survey scale to a 1-10 scale.

As Table 6 displays, the standard scores from the HBCU are higher across the board than are the scores from the PWI. The three questions that generate the largest differences are Question 4 “Not planning to, but using unauthorized materials or devices during an examination or any other form of academic evaluation and grading” (2.345), Question 2 “Not planning to, but coping from another person's paper or receiving unauthorized aid from another person during an examination” (2.210), and Question 3 “Planning to and then using unauthorized materials or devices during an examination or any other form of academic evaluation and grading: for example, using signals, notes, books, or calculators during an examination when the instructor has not approved their use” (2.190). Questions 2 and 4 speak to the same pattern of acceptance of accidental indirect actions being more acceptable on the part of students at the HBCU.

Table 6: Comparison of PWI and HBCU Students

Survey Question	Mean Score Behavior PWI^	Standard Score PWI*	Mean Score Behavior HBCU#	Standard Score HBCU*	Standard Score Difference
Q1	1.380	0.950	-1.920	3.080	2.130
Q2	1.500	1.250	-1.540	3.460	2.210
Q3	1.440	1.100	-1.710	3.290	2.190
Q4	1.370	0.925	-1.730	3.270	2.345
Q5	1.550	1.375	-1.700	3.300	1.925
Q6	1.730	1.825	-1.260	3.740	1.915
Q7	1.130	0.325	-3.490	1.510	1.185
Q8	1.170	0.425	-3.510	1.490	1.065
Q9	1.250	0.625	-2.960	2.040	1.415
Q10	2.110	2.775	-0.690	4.310	1.535
Q11	1.700	1.750	-2.150	2.850	1.100
Q12	1.520	1.300	-3.060	1.940	0.640
Q13	1.980	2.450	-1.850	3.150	0.700
Q14	1.600	1.500	-2.420	2.580	1.080
Q15	1.150	0.375	-3.690	1.310	0.935
Q16	1.250	0.625	-3.020	1.980	1.355

^1: Never, 2: Seldom, 3: Occasionally, 4: Often, 5: Very Often.

*Scores standardized into a 10 point scale for comparison purposes.

#-5 Would Never Consider to 5 Done It many Times

The responses generating the three smallest differences between PWI and HBCU students are Question 12 “Using unauthorized materials or fabricated data in an unacceptable exercise: for example, falsifying data in a research paper or laboratory experiment” (.640), Question 13 “Coping sentences, phrases, paragraphs, tables, figures or data directly or in slightly modified form from a book, article, or other academic source without using quotation marks or giving proper acknowledgments to the original author or source” (.700), and Question 15 “Buying papers for the purpose of turning them in as your own work” (.935)”. It is evident that the same pattern holds in terms of premeditated direct actions as least acceptable. The differences are very small between the HBCU and PWI students

when it comes to these actions and indicate that students, in general, recognize the serious negative nature of these misconduct actions.

When looking at students at a HBCU in comparison to students at a PWI, it is important to keep in mind two important speculations. First, the studies occurred approximately eight years apart, and it is possible that the differences we find between institutions are, at least in part, an artifact of the times. Second, and perhaps the more interesting postulate, is that the HBCU students are more honest about their academic misconduct beliefs and behaviors. Thus, the distinct possibility exists that the culture at the institution is one of being honest about dishonesty. Future studies will answer the questions raised by these speculations if the findings show an increasing trend in the disregard for honest academic behavior, irrespective of institutional setting. It is also possible to imagine future work that measures attitudes toward honesty about dishonesty.

Our final analysis looks at the apparent disconnect between student beliefs and their behaviors. Stephens and Nicholson claim that many students experience belief–behavior incongruity specifically in the domain of academic dishonesty (2008, p. 363). This is certainly the case with the students participating in this study. Table 7 shows the means for each of the sixteen actions. Column one of the table displays the belief mean, while column two displays the behavior mean. Column three of the table shows the difference in the two means. Since both scales range from -5 to 5 (Completely Unacceptable to Completely Acceptable, and Would Never Consider It to Have Done It Many Times, respectively), the raw scores can be compared without mapping to a standard scale. In addition, with only two exceptions, the means for beliefs are smaller than the means for behavior. Since there is a straightforward interpretation of the values, an absolute mean was not calculated. The mean difference is simply the belief mean minus the behavior mean, with larger negative values meaning there is greater incongruity between student beliefs and actions. Larger negative mean differences indicate that students believe the action more unacceptable than their likelihood to consider participating in the action. For the two actions that generate a positive value, student resistance to considering taking an action, is greater than their belief of its unacceptability.

Table 7: T-Test of Differences Between Beliefs and Behaviors

Survey Question	Belief Mean Score	Behavior Mean Score	^Mean Difference
Q1	-3.590	-1.920	*-1.67
Q2	-3.220	-1.540	*-1.68
Q3	-3.560	-1.710	*-1.85
Q4	-3.290	-1.730	*-1.56
Q5	-3.330	-1.700	*-1.63
Q6	-3.070	-1.260	*-1.81
Q7	-3.870	-3.490	-0.380
Q8	-3.900	-3.510	-0.390
Q9	-3.300	-2.960	-0.340
Q10	-1.210	-0.690	-0.520
Q11	-2.430	-2.150	-0.280
Q12	-3.550	-3.060	-0.490
Q13	-3.260	-1.850	*-1.41
Q14	-3.560	-2.420	*-1.14
Q15	-3.500	-3.690	0.190
Q16	-2.980	-3.020	0.040

^Questions 10, 11, 15, 16 assume equal variance.

*Statistically different at the .01 level.

For eight of the sixteen actions, the belief–behavior incongruity is statistically different at the .01 level. In rank order, from largest difference to smallest, the three questions generating the largest statistically significant differences are Question 3 “Planning to and then using unauthorized materials or devices during an examination or any other form of academic evaluation and grading: for example, using signals, notes, books, or calculators during an

examination when the instructor has not approved their use" (-1.85), Question 6 "Realizing, during an exam, that another student wants to copy from your paper, and then allowing that student to copy (or not preventing the student from copying)" (-1.81), and Question 2 "Not planning to, but copying from another person's paper or receiving unauthorized aid from another person during an examination" (-1.68). Interestingly, the greatest incongruence is generated by an action that is counter to the overall pattern in these data. That is, Question 3 describes an action that is premeditated and direct, an action that students find very unacceptable, yet it is an action in which they are more likely to consider participating.

The three questions generating the smallest differences (largest to smallest), and, hence, not statistically significant are Question 12 "Using unauthorized materials or fabricated data in an unacceptable exercise: for example, falsifying data in a research paper or laboratory experiment" (-0.49), Question 15 "Buying papers for the purpose of turning them in as your own work" (0.19), and Question 16 "Selling or lending papers so another student can turn them in as his or her own work" (0.04). Each of these acts (using unauthorized material, buying, and selling) is a premeditated action. Interestingly, none of the actions rank in the top three in terms of unacceptability of belief, or behavior, however student beliefs and behaviors converge in their level of unacceptability on these three items.

DISCUSSION

These data show that student beliefs and behaviors reflect a sense of moral integrity, but also a cognitive incongruity. Although the fact that students are not repulsed by the mere thought of any type of academic misconduct is upsetting to some administrators and faculty, a realist acknowledges that there is a long history of dishonesty on college campuses. The silver lining in these data is that these students consistently rate academically dishonest actions below the level of indifference. On the scales used to measure beliefs and behaviors, a zero (0) is a moral neutral and not one of the sixteen actions is larger than -0.690 (Question 10 as a behavior) Thus, students believe the actions to be wrong, and, although they acknowledge considering taking action, it is not at an unbridled level. It is also the case that academic misconduct that requires premeditated and direct action are viewed as worse offences than actions that are unintended and indirect. This distinction is true for both their beliefs and behaviors.

A key speculation of this research is that the religiosity and strong sense of moral community of a HBCU will temper student beliefs and behaviors when it comes to academic misconduct. To test this conjecture, the self reported behaviors of HBCU students are compared to students attending a PWI. Across the board, the HBCU students reported a greater likelihood of participating in academic misconduct. Clearly, however, the mean scores indicate that, also across the board, academic dishonesty is viewed as a negative occurrence. None of the sixteen actions generate a raw mean above zero (0 – might consider it), and, in terms of standard score, the highest score generated is a 3.080. The roughly eight years between when the Hard et al, (2006) data were collected, and when the data for this research were collected, is also a confounding factor. It is possible that student beliefs and behaviors have changed during this time span, with academic dishonesty becoming more acceptable.

Perhaps the most intriguing finding from these data is that there is, indeed, a very strong incongruence between student beliefs and behaviors. Actions that students rate as unacceptable in terms of their beliefs are not rated as severely negative in terms of their behaviors. Reflecting on the "neutralizing devices" detailed by Stephens and Nicholson (2008), the premeditated and direct actions identified in the data take on a new hue. Thus, students are clearly exhibiting deflective behavior by rating academically dishonest actions as more severe when conducted by someone else.

As a final thought, the gap between student beliefs and behaviors is a curious one, and speaks to the delicate psychology of the human mind. Hutton points out "being able to get away with cheating helps students justify it. Unfortunately, cheaters are rarely caught—less than 2 percent, according to Ralph Wexler, vice president of the nonprofit Joseph and Edna Josephson Institute of Ethics" (2006, p. 171). Students can recognize misconduct, and even be appalled at the thought of it, but, as the old saying goes, 'actions speak louder than words.'

There are more questions raised by this research than answered. Future work can address the role of religion and other variables in forming student beliefs and behaviors. Furthermore, a single form survey design asking respondents to answer each of the sixteen questions for both beliefs and behaviors will provide greater depth to the data and allow for advanced analysis into the phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

This research has provided an overview and insight into beliefs and behaviors of students at a HBCU on academic misconduct. It presents the findings of a survey measuring student beliefs and behaviors concerning sixteen

academic misconduct actions. The mean scores for these sixteen behavior actions are compared to student scores collected at a PWI nearly ten years ago and suggest that most misconduct actions are viewed in a negative light, both in belief and behavior. However, upon mapping the two sets of means to a common scale, the students in this study are more lenient in their behaviors than the students of the earlier study.

The findings from this research also show that student beliefs and behaviors of acceptability vary by action, with premeditated and direct actions being less acceptable and actionable. In addition, there is a clear incongruity between what students say is morally unacceptable and their behaviors. Overall the study has contributed to the discussion of academic misconduct on the part of students by examining the role that type of institution plays in the manifestation of self reported beliefs and behaviors.

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