

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Abstract approved: 

Given the diverse opinions about cheating between faculty and students, the present study sought to determine if there was a significant difference between students' and faculty's views of using past exams as a study guide for future tests. Results indicated that faculty typically do not tell their students that using past exams to study is a form of cheating and the majority of faculty remained neutral in their opinion of the appropriateness of using both past exam questions, and answers, as study aids. Students on the other hand, remained neutral in their opinion of using past exam answers, but tended to view using past exam questions as a less serious offense than faculty. Furthermore, students tended to use past exams to study even when told that it was dishonest.

USING PAST EXAMS AS STUDY AIDS:
CHEATING OR ACCEPTABLE PRACTICE?

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Review of the Literature

Academic dishonesty is found on every campus of every school in America, but for colleges and universities the process of weeding out students who cheat is very difficult. Cizek (1999) defines cheating as “an attempt, by deceptive or fraudulent means, to represent oneself as possessing knowledge” (p. 3). Cheating can have many forms, that range in severity, whether it be having another person take the test for you, copying a nearby students’ responses, using someone else’s writing as your own, “fudging” a lab report, writing a paper for someone, giving a false reason for missing an exam or not doing your share of a group project, to name just a few (Sims, 1995). Some of the issues discussed in this literature review on cheating that will be discussed include the prevalence of cheating, how cheating is accomplished, why students cheat, the consequences of cheating, differences in students’ and faculty’s perceptions of cheating, and using past exams as a form of cheating.

Prevalence of Cheating

We know cheating occurs on all college and university campuses but just how prevalent is it? Results seem to vary, but for the most part, researchers have reported the prevalence of cheating is anywhere from about 40-90%, meaning that 40-90% of students on college campuses in the US have cheated at one or more points during their college careers (Jendrick, 1992; Wellborn, 1980). Stern and Havlicek (1986) found that 82% of the students surveyed reported they had cheated at some time during their college careers. Similarly Cizek (1999) stated, “Across all locations the percentage of students who stated

that it was wrong to cheat was never below 90%” (p. 18). College students know it is wrong to cheat, but they still do it. Although there is variability in the amount of cheating reported on campuses across the US, these numbers still remain high for the most part.

Other studies have attempted to determine if cheating behavior is increasing or decreasing, but for the most part results have been mixed. For example, Spiller and Crown (1995) found contrasting results in a meta-analysis they performed to see if cheating was increasing. Some of the studies Spiller and Crown examined showed cheating behaviors are still on the rise whereas other studies found cheating behavior is reaching a plateau (Spiller & Crown). Spiller and Crown found no increase in cheating based on any behavioral measures in the studies they looked at; however, they stated that even though no linear trend was found, other cheating behaviors may be increasing. Collectively, most research indicates that cheating behavior is high and is not going down. Cizek (1999) did find, however, that a major weakness of most of the surveys on cheating was that students are asked only if they had engaged in cheating, and not how often they actually did cheat.

Research has also looked at the accuracy of self-reported cheating by students. According to Cizek (1999), a high percentage of students have correctly reported cheating. Scheers and Dayton (1987) also stated the levels of cheating may actually be underestimated by these self-reports, and experimental studies show that when given the opportunity, students will take advantage of a situation. Smith, Ryan, and Diggins (1972) suggest that a high percentage of students are truthful in admitting to cheating. The authors stated there is a potential for distortions on self-report questionnaires including

potential for lying, defensiveness and social desirability, but overall findings have found that students do not conceal or under report their cheating behaviors.

Students who are more likely to cheat appear to be members of a fraternity or sorority (Moffatt, 1990, as cited in Cizek, 1999). Baird (1980) conducted a study in which 200 students were asked about 33 behavioral areas, which related to cheating and the perceptions of cheating. Greeks had a greater likelihood of cheating on tests than Greeks, and used more cooperative methods like copying assignments, allowing others to copy assignments, and taking tests for others. McCabe and Bowers (1996) also found in a sample of 1,793 students from 7 institutions, that cheating among Greeks is increasing and more common. Eighty-six percent of fraternity members and 82% of sorority members versus 67% of independent students have admitted to cheating (McCabe & Bowers). Stannard and Bowers (1970) found there was only a slight difference between Greeks and independents. The rate of cheating for Greeks was only 7% higher than that of independent students. However, Stannard and Bowers also found that as the proportion of Greek membership on campus went up, the levels of cheating decreased for both Greeks and independent students. They stated the reason for this finding is that at schools where the Greek population is larger, other students' personal feelings of disapproval cannot be neutralized as easily. There also seems to be more control over the fraternity or sororities social resources and so there are more constraints against using these resources for academically dishonest behavior by both members and nonmembers. McCabe and Bowers (1996) reported that the number of sorority members who admitted to cheating has risen (from 59% to 70%) since the Stannard and Bowers study. However, the level of reported cheating for fraternity members has remained the same (69% to 70%). They

suggest the reason for this finding is that women are moving into more male-dominated fields and so they feel the need to “remain academically competitive with men who cheat” (McCabe & Bowers, p. 291).

How Cheating is Accomplished

It has been established that cheating is fairly common on college campuses but how do students cheat? Cizek (1999) stated there are three primary ways in which cheating is conducted. These techniques include taking, giving, or receiving information from others; using forbidden materials or information; and taking advantage of the testing situation. Students take advantage of the testing situation being uncontrolled or ambiguous, the instructors’ willingness to help, or expected social norms for politeness (Cizek). For example, students may copy from other students when no one is watching, or may ask a question of the instructor that the instructor, should not answer, but they do not want to be rude and say they cannot answer.

Baird (1980) asked students to rate the frequency of their behavior on a three-point Likert scale (1 = *never*, 2 = *occasionally*, and 3 = *often*). Results indicated that the most frequent method of cheating was to obtain test information from other students, such as test content or test answers, allowing someone else to copy your work, or copying someone else’s work. According to Cizek (1999), however, this study had a problem because, “no specific definitions of *never*, *occasionally* or *often* were given” (p. 21). This deficit may be a problem of perception because what one student views as never, occasionally, or often, can differ drastically from the view of other students, either inflating or underestimating the means. Cizek stated that although the means were high, the results are not as interpretable as one might imagine.

Why Students Cheat

Answering the question of why students cheat is not as easy as answering the question of how students cheat, although some definite reasons have been found. Smith et al. (1972) found four major pressures for why students cheat: graduate school requirements, competition for grades, heavy workload, and insufficient study time. Baird (1980) also found eight reasons why students cheat, including the four found by Smith et al. He found that 35% of students felt a competition for grades, 33% felt they had insufficient study time, 26% said they had a large work load, 22% listed other reasons, 9% said they felt pressured by their instructor, 8% felt pressure of graduate school or job requirements, 8% said they felt pressure from their parents to do well, and 7% said that they felt pressure from their friends to cheat. Baird (1980) also found that of the 22% who listed other reasons for cheating, most of these students tended to blame outside factors to justify their reason for cheating. Few students blamed internal factors, such as laziness, as being part of the problem. These results are consistent with those of Singhal (1982) who found that “sixty-eight percent [of students] believed cheating was a direct result of competition for grades” (p. 779).

Other researchers have looked at some of the reasons why students cheat. Nuss (1984) asked students and faculty to give their opinions about why students cheat. Forty-five percent of students and 37% of faculty said it was necessary to avoid failing a class. Nuss also found that 21% of students and 23% of faculty felt that another reason students cheat was because no one ever gets punished for it. Moffatt (1990, as cited in Cizek, 1999) found that students report they start cheating because they see other students doing less by cheating and getting better grades. Many students also try to neutralize their

academically dishonest behavior. They may know that cheating is wrong, but they feel that under certain circumstances cheating is okay (such as when a teacher or test is unfair), therefore they cheat with a clear conscience. These students have neutralized the situation and some students do it so effectively that they really do not think cheating by themselves or by others is wrong (Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff, & Clark, 1986; Sykes & Matza, 1957).

Diekhoff et al. (1996) also suggest other reasons why students cheat. These reasons include little financial stake in their education and ineffective social control mechanisms. Students who are not paying for their education seem to view cheating as a less serious matter. Perhaps they are not concerned because if they do not make the grade they are not worried about having to pay to take the class over. Social controls also seem to be ineffective, according to Diekhoff et al. because most people's internal controls of conscience and guilt are weak and external controls of punishment, although higher, usually fail because students know they will most likely not get caught.

There are two types of cheating, spontaneous or planned. Genereux and McLeod (1995) hypothesized that certain circumstances surrounding cheating were most influential if the cheating was planned or if it was spontaneous. For example, the perception that the instructor did not care was rated as a reason why students would be more likely to plan to cheat, whereas dependence on financial aid was a reason why students would be more likely to spontaneously cheat. Genereux and McLeod found, however, that there was no difference in response to planned or spontaneous cheating. Students cheated regardless of the circumstances. They do suggest that students are most likely to cheat spontaneously when they realize the test is more difficult than expected.

Another reason why students cheat has more to do with self-image and not circumstances. Covington (1992) stated that students want to maintain a positive self-image. When students try to perform a task over and over with great effort and fail, they are likely to cheat because they do not want to see themselves as lacking in ability. Not being able to do something which others can do is a serious threat to a person's self-image. Despite the above explanations, the reason students cheat might be simple. According to Cizek (1999), most "students primarily cheat to get a better grade" (p. 31).

Consequences of Cheating

What happens when students get caught cheating? Most cheating goes on without detection or a response (Cizek, 1999). Singhal (1982) reports only 3% of students report being caught cheating and professors were more likely than students to report an incidence of cheating (21% v. 7%). Students who observe others cheat do not report it because in most cases they have known what it is like to be in that person's place, or because of the stigma attached to telling on someone else (Cizek). Other researchers, such as Haines et al. (1986), report only a very small percentage (e.g., 1.3%) of their participants reported being caught cheating. Cizek suggests the fact that few students are caught and even fewer are "prosecuted," may have caused a rise in the frequency of cheating. Students are more likely to cheat if they feel they are not going to get in trouble for doing it. Graham, Monday, O'Brien, and Steffen (1994) found that whereas 78.7% of faculty have at one time caught a student cheating, only 9% have penalized the student by failing the student on the assignment, deducting points, or failing the student in the course.

So why is it that faculty are not “catching” or “turning in” students who are cheating? According to Jendrick (1989) almost 60% of faculty at some point have observed some form of cheating, but most faculty (more than 80%) do not report the cheating or do not follow university policy with regard to cheating. Why? Jendrick (1985) also found that of this 60%, only 67% discussed the issue with the student, 33% reported the incident to the department chair, 20% met with the department chair and the student, and 8% actually ignored the problem. In most cases faculty members noted they felt the student only needed to know they (the faculty member) did not tolerate this behavior, they were not 100% sure the student was cheating, or department policy or the department chairperson told them to handle the situation in a certain way (Jendrick, 1989). McCabe (1993) also reported faculty did not report cheating because finding the proof necessary to prove the cheating was almost impossible. Most faculty believe other people do not want to take the time to document the cheating and although they know of cheating occurring or have seen it occur, the institution can actually make it difficult for faculty to respond to it in a formal way (Davis, Grover, Becker & McGregor, 1992)

According to Haines et al. (1986), the biggest deterrents of cheating include fear of formal institutional consequences, threats of receiving an F or being dropped from the course, or fear of university retaliation. Researchers see these deterrents as most effective for students who try to externalize an incident to things like “the test was too hard” or “everyone else was doing it” (Cizek, 1999). For other students who do not externalize the incident, fear of embarrassment or punishment seems to be the strongest deterrent. According to Cizek penalties can include, but are not limited to, an informal conversation between the student and instructor, a grade penalty, loss of credit on the assignment,

cancellation of the test score, expulsion from school, loss of professional license or certification, fines, and incarceration. Singhal (1982) also found that 86% of faculty said second time cheaters should be expelled, whereas only 38% of students were in favor of expulsion for second time offenders. Moffett (1990, as cited in Cizek, 1999) stated the primary reason students do not cheat is because they fear being caught.

Differences in Student and Faculty Perceptions of Cheating

Faculty and students not only differ in their perceptions of cheating, but in their perceptions of proper punishment. In their survey of 6,000 students, Davis et al. (1992) found the most popular recommendation for punishment by students was simply for the instructor to tell the person to “keep their eyes on their own paper” (p. 19). Twenty percent of the students suggested taking away the test or allowing the students to start over and another 20% recommended giving the person who cheated a failing grade. In contrast, Roberts and Toombs (1993) found in their sample of 250 students and 180 faculty, that faculty would assign harsher punishments than the students recommended. Faculty were more likely to view the cheating as more serious and would recommend failing the student on the test. Students, on the other hand, recommended only that the test grade be lowered. According to Roberts and Toombs, some students even felt that the cheating was somewhat the fault of the professor for not regulating the testing situation; they considered this situation to be opportunistic cheating and felt that students should not be punished for taking advantage of the opportunity. One interesting finding was that students who did assign harsher punishment believed faculty were not adequately concerned about cheating. They may have seen others get away with cheating or are the students who are more concerned about academic integrity (Roberts & Toombs).

We know faculty and students differ in their perceptions of punishment, but do they differ in their perceptions of how much cheating actually occurs? Students are fairly accurate at judging the amount of cheating and faculty either do not, or choose not, to see it in many cases (Cizek, 1999). Student and faculty perceptions of cheating vary in both frequency and seriousness. Faculty tend to believe that cheating happens less and they tend to think students view cheating as something that is very serious. Students on the other hand do not view cheating as seriously as faculty do, and they are more accurate in predicting the frequency of cheating (Cizek, 1999).

Wright and Kelly (1974) found that in most cases students and faculty agreed on what types of behavior constituted cheating. Both students and teachers perceive a person who willingly gives or takes information, or someone who takes information without the knowledge of someone else, as guilty of cheating (Cizek, 1999). In a study conducted by Nuss (1984) 146 students and 169 faculty completed a survey in which they ranked 14 forms of academic dishonesty from most serious to least serious. Both groups agreed on four of the five most serious behaviors and on the least five serious behaviors. It is interesting to note that both faculty and students viewed getting the questions or answers from someone who has already taken the exam as one of the least severe behaviors. Students ranked this behavior as number 11 out of 15 and faculty ranked it number 10 out of 15 (Nuss).

Livosky and Tauber (1994) found results consistent with Wright and Kelly (1974); students and faculty generally are in agreement about what is considered cheating. They found that students are more conservative than faculty in their views of cheating because they viewed preparation or intention to cheat as cheating. Just preparing to cheat, which

includes such things as making a “crib” or cheat sheet even if it is never used, is seen as more serious by students.

Using Past Exams

Conclusions about using exams belonging to students who took the class in a previous semester was also viewed as cheating by students, but in this case faculty seemed to view this behavior as a more serious event than students (Cizek, 1999). Graham et al. (1994) found that 66% of students viewed using an old test to study, without the teacher’s knowledge, as cheating, and 37% of students admitted to this behavior. Eighty-three percent of faculty viewed using old exams to study without teacher knowledge as cheating. When asked to rank the severity of this offense on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = *not cheating* and 4 = *very severe*), faculty rated this offense at 2.23 and students ranked it at 2.02. Both groups were then asked how the other group would rank the offense. Faculty said students would rate the offense at 1.60, and students said faculty would rate the offense at 2.59.

It also seems both students and faculty believed using exams from fraternity/sorority or other “test” files constituted cheating. Stern and Havlicek (1986) found that 41% of students have “previewed” an exam from a test file when the teacher did not permit the students to keep copies of the exam or did not know an exam file existed. Fifty-seven percent of students considered this behavior cheating, as did 94% of faculty. They also found whereas 70% of faculty believed memorizing a block of questions for inclusion in a test file or use by others was considered cheating, only 46% of students believed this behavior was cheating. Only 11% of students admitted to engaging in this behavior but 32% admitted to memorizing questions for their own use at a later date. It also seems that

if the material is for personal use only (e.g., the student uses the material only as a study aid for him or herself) fewer faculty and students view this behavior as cheating (33% and 17%, respectively) (Stern & Havlicek). In other words, it seems to be acceptable to memorize test questions for personal use at a later time, but if the questions are memorized for use by others, both faculty and students viewed this behavior in a less favorable light. However, Wright and Kelly (1974) found only 11% of students and 12% of faculty considered using materials from files (including getting a general idea of what was on the test to memorizing actual items) as cheating behavior.

Research indicates using exams, which were illegally obtained, is considered serious by both faculty and students. Stern and Havlicek (1986) found that student and faculty perceptions did not differ when asked if “tearing out and taking a page or pages of an exam when the teacher does not permit keeping the exam” (p. 135). In both groups 91% said this behavior constituted cheating. Only 7% of respondents admitted to committing this offense, meaning it does not occur as often as the other types of offenses and may be seen as more serious. Students and faculty also seemed to agree that getting a copy of an exam by having a student, who is not enrolled in the class, sit in for the exam, is considered cheating. Ninety-six percent of faculty and 93% of students considered this behavior to be cheating. Only 4% of students admitted to committing this offense.

Other studies have found similar results. Singhal (1982) found 12% of students had seen the exam before it was given. Graham et al. (1994) found 95% of students and 100% of faculty viewed finding a copy of an exam and memorizing the answers as cheating. Only 17% of the respondents in this study admitted to committing this behavior. When asked to rank the severity of this offense on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = *not cheating* and 4 =

very severe), faculty rated this offense at 3.39 whereas students ranked at 2.97. Both faculty and students also indicated how they thought the other group would rank the severity of the offense. Faculty said students would rank the severity of finding a copy of the exam at 2.48, whereas students said that faculty would rate the severity at about 3.57.

Students who obtain test questions from students in earlier sections are also seen as committing a cheating offense by both faculty and students. Stern and Havlicek (1986) found 76% of students asked another student for questions on a test, which the other student had taken, but they had not. They also found only 45% of students viewed this behavior as cheating, whereas 87% of faculty viewed this behavior as being a form of cheating.

Graham et al. (1994) found 46% of students had given the test questions to students in a later class even though 86% of them viewed this behavior as cheating. Ninety-seven percent of faculty viewed giving the questions to the later class as cheating. The researchers calculated severity ratings to determine how faculty and students viewed this behavior. Faculty rated this behavior with a severity rating of 3.36, whereas students rated it at 2.73. Faculty said students would rate the behavior lower than they actually did at 2.18, but students felt that faculty would rate the behavior as being more severe at 3.32 (Graham et al., 1994). Sims (1995) found that when faculty and students ranked severity of behaviors on a scale from 0-5 (0 = *not dishonest* and 5 = *very serious*), faculty rated "receiving questions from an unauthorized source" at 4.73, and students rated the item at 3.68, a significant difference. Likewise, faculty rated helping others by giving them exam questions at 4.33, and students rated this behavior at 3.20, also a significant difference. In other words, faculty in both studies believed that giving the exam questions

to another student was a serious behavior, but students viewed this behavior as only a moderate offense.

Getting answers from a student in an earlier section was also viewed as a more serious form of cheating by both faculty and students. Stern and Havlicek (1986) found 53% of students who had not taken the test asked another person, who had taken the test, for the answers. Only 63% of students viewed this behavior as cheating, whereas 93% of faculty considered it cheating. Although asking for or giving the answers for an exam to another student was viewed as serious, over half of the students surveyed had committed this offense and they saw this offense as more serious than just asking what questions were on the exam. Graham et al. (1994) found 91% of faculty and 92% of students viewed getting the answers from a student in an earlier session as cheating, and 49% of students had engaged in this behavior. Although their results agreed with Stern and Havlicek in the percentage of students who had committed this behavior and the percentage of faculty who considered this behavior cheating, they did find a difference in the percentage of students who considered this behavior cheating. Graham et al. found almost 30% more students viewed this behavior as cheating. One way to explain these differences could be by the amount of time lapsed between the two studies (8 years) and the changing views of cheating in the academic world. When severity ratings were conducted for this question, faculty rated the severity of the behavior at 3.20 and students rated it at 2.65. Faculty said students would rate the behavior lower than they did at 2.30, but students said faculty would rate this behavior high, but students still estimated lower (3.18) than the actual faculty rating (Graham et al.). Basically, faculty rated this behavior

as being fairly serious, and students felt this type of cheating behavior was only moderately serious.

Overall, the literature on academic dishonesty is quite varied. Some studies find the prevalence of cheating higher than others, and some find cheating behaviors on the increase, whereas others find it has reached a plateau. There also is a wide variety in the methods used to cheat, including taking, giving, or receiving information from others; using forbidden materials or information; and taking advantage of the testing situation. Furthermore, evidence suggests that students feel pressured to do well in school, see others cheat, or do not realize that a behavior is considered cheating, and they do what they think is necessary to pass a class or a test, including engaging academically dishonest behaviors. Although most faculty tend to view cheating as a more serious offense than students, most students who cheat are in fact not held responsible for their academically dishonest behavior. Faculty do not prosecute students either because they are unaware the cheating behavior is occurring or because they feel nothing will come out of it. Conclusions about using past exams to study were similar between faculty and students, both groups saw this behavior as cheating, but faculty seemed to view this as a more serious event than students.

The present study sought to investigate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There will be a difference in how students and faculty view using past exam questions to become familiar with how a professor writes his or her exam questions. Specifically, students will view this behavior as appropriate, whereas faculty will view the behavior as inappropriate.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a difference in how students and faculty view the appropriateness of using other student's answers on past exams to become familiar with how you should answer a question. Specifically, students will view this behavior as appropriate, whereas faculty will view the behavior as inappropriate.

Hypothesis 3: Both students and faculty will agree that instructors/professors do not tell students that using past exams is dishonest or a form of cheating

Hypothesis 4: Students will not use past exams if told using them is cheating.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

Two hundred thirty-six undergraduate students (79 male and 157 female) and 116 faculty (74 male and 42 female) at a medium-sized Midwestern university volunteered to participate in the study. Students ranged in age from 18 to 41 years ($M = 20.54$). The students' average GPA was 3.07, and they represented 33 different majors. Forty-five percent of the students were freshman, 28.0% sophomores, 20.3% juniors, 5.1% seniors, and 1.3% graduate students. The student sample consisted of 86% Caucasian participants, 4.2% African American participants, 3.8% Hispanic participants, .8% Asian/Pacific participants and 3% who considered themselves of some other ethnic background. Some students received credit toward fulfillment of a course requirement.

Faculty participants responded to a questionnaire sent via campus mail. They completed this questionnaire as well as a consent form and sent them back in a pre-addressed envelope. Faculty represented 27 different academic areas. Twenty-six percent of faculty taught all levels of both undergraduate and graduate students, 22.4% taught only undergraduates, 5.2% taught only graduates and 46.5% taught a combination of graduate and undergraduates levels. The faculty sample consisted of 95.7% Caucasian participants, 2.6 Asian/Pacific participants, .9 Hispanic participants and .9 African American participants.

Design

A frequency analysis was conducted for each questionnaire with 1 being very honest (or never) and 5 being very dishonest (or always). The frequency of each response was ranked based on the number of participants who agreed with each response. Percentages

were computed for the number of people who agreed with each choice from the total number of people who answered each question.

Three one-way ANOVAs determined whether faculty and student opinions differed on the appropriateness of using past exams to become familiar with how a professor writes his or her questions, the appropriateness of using other student's answers to become familiar with how you should answer a question, and if instructors/professors told students that using past exams is dishonest or a form of cheating. The means for each group and each of the questions were compared using a one-way ANOVA. The means for the faculty and student groups were compared based on which group the participant was in and their actual response to the question.

Survey Instrument

A 25-item questionnaire measured student attitudes toward activities to prepare for an examination. It asked about such things as reading the textbook, studying using review sheets, using copies of past examination questions, using copies of students answers to past examinations, and studying with other students (see Appendix A). The answers to these items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Fill-in-the blank and forced-choice items requested information concerning ways the respondent prepared for examinations, disposition of the textbooks following completion of the course, and how many hours the respondent studied for a typical examination and a final examination. Demographic items completed by the students included age, sex, current grade point average, classification, and ethnic background.

Faculty completed a 21-item questionnaire, which measured their attitudes toward testing situations and test preparation (see Appendix B). Answers to these items were also

measured on a 5-point Likert scale or with fill-in-the blank and forced-choice items. Information requested included the type of examination used, how they recommend students study for their examinations, how they feel about the difficulty level of their examinations, and do they feel using past examinations gained legally or illegally is a form of cheating. Demographic items completed by the faculty included age, sex, what area they taught, what classifications they taught, and ethnic background.

Procedure

Students completed the survey during a regular class period. After completing the informed consent document (see Appendix C) students received the survey instrument and a demographic questionnaire. All surveys were completed anonymously and although no time limit was imposed, all participants completed the materials within 15 min. Students were then debriefed as to the nature of the study.

All full and part-time faculty were mailed a letter of introduction (see Appendix D) the informed consent document (see Appendix E), survey and demographic questionnaire, and asked to mail the completed materials to a designated campus box using the pre-addressed envelope. The response rate for all faculty was approximately 34% (116 of 339 full and part-time faculty).

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

A frequency analysis was conducted for each set of questionnaires with 1 being very honest (or never) and 5 being very dishonest (or always). Percentages were computed for each of the participant's answers on the Likert scale, and faculty and student's answers were then compared to see if there was a significant difference.

Overall results indicated faculty remained fairly neutral in their opinion regarding the appropriateness of students using both questions and answers from past exams. Fifty percent of faculty stated their opinion was neutral on the appropriateness of using past exams questions and 53.4% of faculty stated their opinion was neutral on the appropriateness of using past exam answers (see Tables 1 & 2). A high percentage of faculty (81%) stated they never tell students using past exams is dishonest or a form of cheating and only 19% tell them sometimes to always (see Table 3).

Students also seemed to remain fairly neutral when asked about the appropriateness of using past exam answers (37.7%, see Table 4). Forty-seven percent did feel however, that it was honest to use past exam questions to study for an exam (see Table 5). Students also agreed with faculty in that 69.9 % of students stated their professors/instructors do not tell them that using past exams is dishonest or a form of cheating (see Table 6). If told that using past exams was a form of cheating 45.3% of students stated they would not use them and 42.8% stated they would only use them sometimes (see Table 7).

Three one-way ANOVAs were conducted to determine whether there was a difference between faculty and student opinions on the appropriateness of using past

Table 1

Faculty Response to Question 13

What is your opinion regarding the appropriateness of students using past exam questions to become familiar with how a professor/instructor writes his or her questions?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Honest	19	16.4
Honest	25	21.6
Neutral	58	50.0
Dishonest	12	10.3
Very Honest	2	1.7

Table 2

Faculty Response to Question 14

What is your opinion regarding the appropriateness of students using other students' answers from past exams to become familiar with how you should answer questions?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Honest	12	10.3
Honest	14	12.1
Neutral	62	53.4
Dishonest	20	17.2
Very Dishonest	8	6.9

Table 3

Faculty Response to Question 15

Do you tell students that using past exams is dishonest or a form of cheating?

	Frequency	Percentage
Never	94	81.0
Sometimes	11	9.5
Often	6	5.2
Very Often	1	.9
Always	4	3.4

Table 4

Student Response to Question 18

What is your opinion regarding the appropriateness of using other students' answers from past exams to become familiar with how you should answer questions?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Honest	12	5.1
Honest	65	27.5
Neutral	109	46.2
Dishonest	38	16.1
Very Dishonest	12	5.1

Table 5

Student Response to Question 17

What is your opinion regarding the appropriateness of using past exam questions to become familiar with how a professor/instructor writes his or her questions?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Honest	26	11.0
Honest	111	47.0
Neutral	89	37.7
Dishonest	10	4.2
Very Dishonest	0	0

Table 6

Student Response to Question 19

Do your professors/instructors tell you that using past exams is dishonest or a form of cheating?

	Frequency	Percentage
Never	165	69.9
Sometimes	45	19.1
Often	18	7.6
Very Often	4	1.7
Always	4	1.7

Table 7

Student Response to Question 21

If you were told that using past exams and test was cheating, would you still use them?

	Frequency	Percentage
Never	107	45.3
Sometimes	101	42.8
Often	19	8.1
Very Often	5	2.1
Always	4	1.7

exams to become familiar with how a professor writes his or her questions, the appropriateness of using other student's answers to become familiar with how you should answer a question, and if instructors/professors told students using past exams is dishonest or a form of cheating.

Results indicated the mean response for faculty, when asked the appropriateness of using past exam questions to become familiar with how professors write their questions, was 2.59 (just between honest and neutral). For students the mean was 2.35 (also between honest and neutral) (see Table 8). Results indicated faculty and students did differ significantly, $F(1, 350) = 7.07, p < .01$, on their opinions of appropriateness of this behavior (see Table 9). An Eta Squared was conducted to determine effect size. Only a small (.02) effect was found, suggesting, there is a weak difference between faculty and students opinions of the appropriateness of using past exam questions.

The mean response for faculty on the question of appropriateness of using other student's answers to become familiar with how you should answer a question, was 2.98 (between honest and neutral, but slightly closer to neutral). For students the mean for this question was 2.89 (see Table 10). Results indicated there were no significant differences ($F(1, 350) = .83, p = .36$) between faculty and student opinions in regards to using other student's answers (see Table 11).

The mean for faculty for the question asking if instructors/professors tell their students using past exams is dishonest or a form of cheating was 1.36 and for students the mean was 1.46 (both between never and sometimes) (see Table 12).

Results indicated no significant differences, $F(1, 350) = 1.05, p = .31$. Both faculty and students agree faculty do not tell students using past exams is dishonest or a form of cheating (see Table 13).

Table 8

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Appropriateness of Using Past Exam Questions For Faculty and Students

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Faculty	116	2.59	.73
Students	236	2.35	.94

Table 9

Summary of One-Way Analysis of Variance of Appropriateness of Using Past Exam Questions For Faculty and Students

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	η	<i>F</i>
Question response	1	4.60	4.60	.02	7.07*
Within	350	227.77	0.65		
Total	351	232.36			

* $p = .008$

Table 10

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Appropriateness of Using Past Exam Answers For Faculty and Students

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Faculty	116	2.98	.91
Students	236	2.89	.99

Table 11

*Summary of One-Way Analysis of Variance of Appropriateness of Using Past Exam
Answers For Faculty and Students*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Answer response	1	0.73	0.73	0.83*
Within	350	309.88	0.89	
Total	351	320.61		

* $p = .363$

Table 12

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Having Told Students Using Past Exams is Cheating

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Faculty	116	1.36	.84
Students	236	1.46	.90

Table 13

Summary of One-Way Analysis of Variance for Having Told Students Using Past Exams is Cheating

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Told response	1	0.78	0.78	1.05*
Within	350	259.41	0.74	
Total	351	260.22		

* $p = .307$

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Results for this study indicate a number of findings for faculty and student opinions about using past exams as study aids. Previous conclusions about using past exams as study aids found similarities between faculty and students opinions (Graham et al., 1994; Stern & Havlicek, 1986). Both groups saw this behavior as cheating, but faculty seemed to view it as a more serious event than students. However, the current study found opinions on this matter to be more neutral than previously reported. Only a significant difference was found between faculty and students opinions related to using past exam questions to see how a professor/instructor writes his or her questions. Faculty remained neutral on the appropriateness of using past exam questions, but students seemed to view this behavior as more honest than faculty.

Hypothesis 1

Faculty and students appear to have differing opinions on the appropriateness of using past exam questions as study aids. Half of the faculty surveyed stated a neutral opinion on the appropriateness of using past exams questions, but slightly under half of students surveyed viewed this behavior as honest, whereas only about 20% of faculty considered this behavior honest. However, a small effect size was found, indicating this difference in opinion may be very weak or not exist at all. Both groups remained rather neutral in opinions with students viewing this behavior as only slightly more honest than faculty.

Hypothesis 2

One interesting finding to note is that although faculty still remained neutral when asked for their opinion on using past test answers, 79% of the students surveyed stated

that using past exam answers to study was not considered dishonest or remained neutral in opinion. However, there was no significant difference found between faculty and student opinions of the appropriateness of using other students' answers on past exams to become familiar with how a student should answer a question. Slightly over half of the faculty surveyed and slightly less than half of students surveyed remained neutral on their opinions of using past exam answers as study aids.

Hypothesis 3

Students also agreed with faculty that their professors/instructors do not tell them using past exams is dishonest or a form of cheating. Both students and faculty seem to agree that students are not told using past exams is cheating, but the reason why faculty do not tell students is unclear. Over 80% of faculty stated they never tell students that using past exams is cheating, and 70% of students agreed with this conclusion, suggesting that students are just unaware using past exams to study could be considered cheating.

Hypothesis 4

So would students use past exams as study aids if they were aware this behavior was considered cheating? The answer is yes and no. A little under half of students would not use a past exam to study if they knew it was considered cheating and the majority of the other half stated they would only use them sometimes. It appears that if students were told using past exams to study was a form of cheating they would not, or only sometimes, use them to study.

Implications

The findings of the present study seem to differ from previous research in which the seriousness of the opinion about using past exams may have been overestimated. Both faculty and students appeared to remain fairly neutral in their opinions of using both past exam questions and answers as a study aid. Neither group seemed to view the behavior as appropriate or inappropriate, suggesting that using past exams as study aids is either not an issue or that it is just not discussed.

Previous research (Graham et al., 1994; Stern & Havlicek, 1986) found viewing exam questions and answers from a student in the previous section was considered a serious offense by faculty as well as students. In the present study, faculty and students appeared neutral on the appropriateness of using exam questions and answers. One possible explanation for this discrepancy in results could be that in the current study students were asked about using previous exam questions and answers as a study aid, whereas students in the previous studies might have obtained the questions and answers to a current exam for the sole purpose of cheating. It may be possible both faculty and students view this overt type of cheating behavior as a more serious event than just using a past exam to study.

Although it is positive to note both faculty and students seem to agree, for the most part, on what is considered cheating, possible problems can arise because faculty are not telling students what is and what is not considered cheating. Each faculty member needs to discuss his or her definition of cheating with their students, or an overall academic policy which clearly defines cheating behavior, are the only solutions to possible

problems of miscommunication between faculty and students as to what is acceptable and what is not.

What makes this problem even more difficult is the blurring of lines between what behaviors are actually considered academically dishonest and what behaviors constitute strong motivation to do well. Using previous exams to study becomes an important issue when students who use these exams as study aids do better in classes than students who do not, independent of time spent studying, motivation, and intelligence. Determining the appropriateness of using past exams as study aids may depend on whether or not using a past exam to study increases a student's grade on an exam.

The form of the test might also play an important role because multiple-choice tests can differ considerably from essay or short answer tests in difficulty and application level of the questions. For example, the questions may provoke thought and application of the material, or they may require simple regurgitation of information. The broader educational issue is whether students who do use past exams to study are actually learning the material and the concepts, or just memorizing word-for-word the answers to the exam.

The study of academic dishonesty is not only important on an academic level, but also on a societal level. More specifically, students who cheat may advance or be hired over students who are actually more qualified. Furthermore, students who cheat may not possess the skills needed to adequately perform in the work force, which can cause loss of time, money, and patience of an employer.

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Appendix A

Student Questionnaire

Age: _____ Sex: M F Current grade point average: _____

Academic major: _____

Class (circle one): Fresh Soph Junior Senior Graduate

Ethnic background:

- American Indian or Alaskan Native Hispanic
- Asian or Pacific Islander White, not Hispanic
- Black, not Hispanic Other

1. Which of the following activities do you generally do to prepare for tests and exams? (Check all that apply):

- Read the class textbook
- Study review questions from the textbook
- Review your class notes
- Study with one or more classmates
- Review questions from class exams given in previous semesters/quarters
- Review student answers on exams given in previous semesters/quarters
- Develop and review flashcards of class material
- Review the notes of other students in your class
- Review the notes of students who took the class previously
- Other (please describe below):

For questions 2-24, circle your desired response or fill in the appropriate answer. Note, "exams" refer to exams or tests in your current courses, "past exams" refer to exams or tests given in a particular class during previous semesters or quarters.

1. It is important to read the class textbook when studying for exams.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. It is important to study review questions from the class textbook (if available) when studying for exams.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. It is important to review your class notes when studying for exams.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. It is important to study with one or more classmates when studying for exams.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. It is helpful when instructors/professors hand out review sheets prior to an exam.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. Instructors/professors let you keep your exams.

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

7. What do you do with your class textbooks after the semester/quarter is done?

Keep them Sell them to students taking the
class next semester/quarter
 Sell them back to bookstore Other: _____

8. How many hours, on average, do you study for a typical exam?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or more

9. How many hours, on average, do you study for a final exam?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or more

10. Where do you generally study for exams?

Home Library Other: _____

11. What type of background noise do you prefer when studying for exams?

Silence Television Music Other: _____

12. How often do you use copies of past exam questions (i.e., questions only, no answers) to study?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

13. How often do you use copies of students' answers on past exams to study?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

14. Do your instructors/professors encourage you to obtain copies of past exams to study?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

15. How often do your instructors provide copies of past exam questions?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

16. How often do your instructors provide example exam answers?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

17. What is your opinion regarding the appropriateness of using past exam questions to become familiar with how a professor/instructor writes his or her questions?

Very Honest Honest Neutral Dishonest Very Dishonest

18. What is your opinion regarding the appropriateness of using other students' answers from past exams to become familiar with how you should answer questions?

Very Honest Honest Neutral Dishonest Very Dishonest

19. Do your instructors/professors tell you that using past exams is dishonest or a form of cheating?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

20. Would you agree with academic guidelines or rules that prohibited students from using past exams to study?

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

21. If you were told that using past exams and tests was cheating, would you still use them?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

22. Which exam format do you most prefer (circle one)?

Essay Multiple Choice Short Answer Fill-in-the-Blank

Mixture (please specify): _____

23. Which exam format do you see most often in your courses (circle one)?

Essay Multiple Choice Short Answer Fill-in-the-Blank

Mixture (please specify): _____

24. In general, rate the difficulty level of exams in your current courses:

Too Difficult Difficult Just Right Easy Too Easy

Appendix B

Faculty Questionnaire

Sex: M F

Academic Area: _____

Level of Classes taught (circle more than one if applicable):

Fresh Soph Junior Senior Graduate

Your ethnic background:

<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaskan Native	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian or Pacific Islander	<input type="checkbox"/> White, not Hispanic
<input type="checkbox"/> Black, not Hispanic	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

1. Which of the following activities do you generally encourage your students to do to prepare for tests and exams? (Check all that apply):

- Read the class textbook
- Study review questions from the textbook
- Review your class notes
- Study with one or more classmates
- Review questions from class exams given in previous semesters/quarters
- Review student answers on exams given in previous semesters/quarters
- Develop and review flashcards of class material
- Review the notes of other students in your class
- Review the notes of students who took the class previously
- Other (please describe below):
- _____
- _____
- _____

For questions 2-20, circle your desired response or fill in the appropriate answer. Note, “**exams**” refer to exams or tests in your current courses, “**past exams**” refer to exams or tests given in a particular class during previous semesters or quarters.

1. Do you encourage students to read the class textbook when studying for exams?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

2. Do you encourage students to study review questions from the class textbook (if available) when studying for exams?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

3. Do you encourage students to review their class notes when studying for exams?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

4. Do you generally hand out review sheets prior to an exam?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

5. Do you encourage students to study with one or more classmates when studying for exams?

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. Do you let students keep their exams after grading?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

7. How many hours, on average, do you recommend students study for a typical exam?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or more

8. How many hours, on average, do you recommend students study for a final exam?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or more

9. Do you encourage students to use copies of past exam questions (i.e., questions only, no answers) to study?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

10. Do you encourage students to use copies of students' answers on past exams to study?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

11. Do you provide students with copies of past exam questions?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

12. Do you provide students with example exam answers to help them prepare for exams?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

13. What is your opinion regarding the appropriateness of students using past exam questions to become familiar with how a professor/instructor writes his or her questions?

Very Honest Honest Neutral Dishonest Very Dishonest

14. What is your opinion regarding the appropriateness of students using other students' answers from past exams to become familiar with how you should answer questions?

Very Honest Honest Neutral Dishonest Very Dishonest

15. Do you tell students that using past exams is dishonest or a form of cheating?

Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

16. Would you agree with academic guidelines or rules that prohibited students from using past exams to study?

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

17. Which exam format do you most often use in your courses (circle one)?

Essay Multiple Choice Short Answer Fill-in-the-Blank

Mixture (please specify): _____

18. Which of the following approach do you most often use to prepare exam questions?

- Use test bank questions Ask students in the class to write questions
 Use questions from past exams Ask Teaching Assistant(s) to write questions
 Write entirely new questions

19. How do you generally grade your exams?

- Use automated device (e.g., Scantron) Grade all items myself
 Ask Teaching Assistant(s) to grade all items Grade a portion of items and ask Teaching Assistant(s) to grade remaining items

20. In general, rate the difficulty level of exams in your current courses:

Too Difficult Difficult Just Right Easy Too Easy

Appendix C

Student Informed Consent Document

Please read this consent form. If you have any questions ask the experimenter and she will answer the questions.

The department of Psychology supports the practice of human subjects participating in research and related activities. The following is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, and that if you do withdraw from the study, you will not be subjected to reprimand or any other form of reproach.

You will be asked to complete a survey about your study habits for tests. Responses from all participants will remain anonymous. This procedure will take approximately five minutes.

“I have read the above statement and have been fully advised for the procedures to be used in this project. I have been given sufficient opportunity to ask any questions I had concerning the procedures and possible risks involved. I understand the potential risks involved and I assume them voluntarily. I likewise understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without being subjected to reproach.”

Participant Signature

Date

Appendix D

Letter of Introduction to Faculty

January 30, 2000

Dear Faculty Member,

My name is Ginger Graumann and I am a graduate student in clinical psychology. I am currently working on my thesis and I need faculty input to complete my project. The project will include looking at student and faculty attitudes to see if either group considers using previous exams from a class, as cheating. I will also look to see if their attitudes differ on exactly what would be considered cheating and what would not be considered cheating.

If you could please fill out the attached consent form and survey. Please send these items in separate envelopes to maintain anonymity. Send them back to me through campus mail (Box 31). Thank you for helping me complete my graduate education at ESU!

Sincerely,

Ginger Graumann

Appendix E

Faculty Informed Consent Document

Read this consent form. If you have any questions ask the experimenter and she will answer the questions.

The department of Psychology supports the practice of human subjects participating in research and related activities. The following is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, and that if you do withdraw from the study, you will not be subjected to reprimand or any other form of reproach.

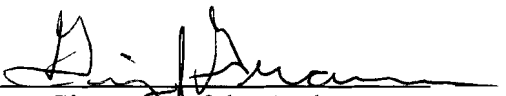
You will be asked to complete a survey about your methods of testing. All participants will remain anonymous. This procedure will take approximately five minutes.

“I have read the above statement and have been fully advised for the procedures to be used in this project. I have been given sufficient opportunity to ask any questions I had concerning the procedures and possible risks involved. I understand the potential risks involved and I assume them voluntarily. I likewise understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without being subjected to reproach.”

Participant Signature

Date

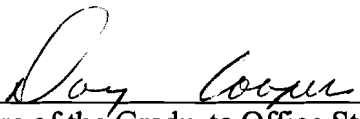
I, Ginger J. Graumann, hereby submit this thesis to Emporia State University as partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree. I agree that the Library of the University may make it available to use in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I further agree that quoting, photocopying, or other reproduction of this document is allowed for private study, scholarship (including teaching) and research purposes of a nonprofit nature. No copying which involves potential financial gain will be allowed without written permission of the author.


Signature of the Author

4-22-02
Date

Using Past Exams as Study Aids:

Cheating or Acceptable Practice?


Signature of the Graduate Office Staff

5-10-02
Date Received