TWO STEPS FORWARD OR ONE STEP BACK? HOW RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES IN ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT CASES IMPACT STUDENT MORAL DECISION-MAKING

by

COURTNEY S. CULLEN

(Under the Direction of Amy Stich)

ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions are responsible for ensuring the integrity of the degrees they award, which includes addressing academic misconduct. Students engage in academic misconduct for a plethora of reasons, including individual and contextual factors. Factors such as moral disengagement and failure to judge academic work as a moral issue relate to student moral decision-making. Students have the capacity to grow in their moral decision-making during college; institutions leverage this potential by creating policies and procedures that utilize restorative justice practices to adjudicate cases of alleged academic misconduct and remediate students who acknowledge cheating. This may help students develop their moral decision-making skills by causing prolonged moral dissonance. This dissertation provides a case study of one such institution using restorative justice-based practices. Findings suggest that restorative justice practices functioned as moral disruptors that develop moral decision-making. Despite exposure to these disruptors, students did not necessarily reach the highest levels of moral decision-making to choose academic integrity after committing academic misconduct.

INDEX WORDS: Academic integrity, Restorative justice practices, Higher education, Moral development

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by

COURTNEY S. CULLEN

B.A., The University of Georgia, 2013

M.A., The University of Georgia, 2016

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COURTNEY S. CULLEN

Major Professor	Amy Stich
Committee	James Hearn
	Robert Toutkoushian
	Jennifer Blaney

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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DEDICATION

There are many people to whom this work is dedicated. Their support during my doctoral journey was integral to completing this dissertation. To my husband, I could not have completed this without you. Thank you for tolerating late nights, early mornings, and taking care of hearth and home while I tapped away at my keyboard. I am so lucky to have your support. From the COVID-19 pandemic, health scares, and endurance training to fence feuds and building furniture, there is no one I would rather face challenges with. You a make life better. Thanks also go to the best doggo in the entire world—Lily—and her older brothers, who taught me that cats are actually awesome—Dante and Obi (RIP)—for snuggles and reminders to go outside.

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Lastly, this dissertation is dedicated to the academic integrity practitioners working to build cultures of integrity. The work is tough, and the rewards may feel few and far between, but

you are making a difference. May this work offer you some direction for your policies and procedures. To those of you who directly inspired me to dream bigger and work harder, I am eternally grateful.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Academic integrity is the foundation upon which higher education rests. Without academic integrity, the credentials bestowed upon graduates would be meaningless. The definition and application of academic integrity varies between sources, as does its focus, but its value in education remains constant. The links between academic misconduct and workplace misconduct (Guerrero-Dib et al., 2020; LaDuke, 2013; Nonis & Swift, 2001) provide the moral imperative for educational institutions to teach their students how to meet ethical standards, including addressing academic misconduct when it does occur and helping the students learn and grow from poor moral decisions. As we look at the rates of academic misconduct, we can see that a failure to address student ethical decision-making is a significant cause for concern, especially when we consider that undergraduate students who leave college and enter the workforce will continue to use the same decision-making process in their careers they began in their schooling.

Donald McCabe was the most prolific researcher on the rates of student academic misconduct. Using a series of surveys based on Bill Bowers (1964) research, McCabe and his team spent decades from the 1990s to 2010 gathering data on academic misconduct (McCabe et al., 2012). The rates of misconduct varied from 65% - 87%, indicating that nearly all students engage in some form of academic misconduct during their academic careers. McCabe's findings are likely underestimated given the social desirability bias present in self-reported surveys. In the most recent iteration of Don McCabe's survey administered 2020-2021, the ICAI reports that in

the previous year, 30% of students self-report "cheating in any way on an exam," 23% self-report the use of unauthorized resources, 26% self-report colluding on an individual assignment, and 14% self-report moderate plagiarism (*International Center for Academic Integrity*, 2023). Even today, a substantial number of students self-report engaging in academic misconduct.

Once viewed as a personal failing that required substantial punishment, the ways that academic misconduct is addressed by higher education institutions has transformed (Cullen, 2022). After *Dixon v. Alabama* (1961), post-secondary education began to rely on formal court-like proceedings to guarantee the due process rights required by the federal courts. However, treating academic misconduct as a crime failed to curb cases, especially as access to information expanded with the Internet, making plagiarism and unauthorized access to materials easier for students. Today, the Internet is ubiquitous, and quickly becoming synonymous with Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), replacing student thinking with the output of machine learning. As time has progressed, institutions are more readily turning to alternative dispute resolution models to address the balance between due process requirements and educational approaches that match institutional missions, retaining students through restorative approaches rather than excluding them with overly harsh sanctions (Cullen, 2022).

The institutional approach to academic integrity and academic misconduct can help students learn to make more ethical decisions (Stephens & Bertram Gallant, 2023). Academic integrity practitioners—much like student conduct practitioners—work to develop student ethical decision-making skills, often using indigenous practices like restorative justice that were co-opted by Western judicial systems (Zehr, 1990). Whether and how these programs work, however, is rarely thoroughly investigated. Student Conduct post-infraction interventions have more information, but academic integrity specific interventions lack serious scholarly study. This

study aimed to dive deep into one such academic integrity program to examine the impact of the intervention on student moral decision-making.

Defining Academic Integrity

Before interrogating the intervention, the underlying principles of academic integrity must be defined. Academic integrity has been defined from several different philosophical orientations. Phillip Dawson and colleagues (2024) "propose[d] a reframing of cheating as subsumed by assessment validity. In this view, cheating is addressed without moralising, as part of the broader positive mission of assurance of learning" (p. 1). They argued that shifting the focus to validity matters more in guaranteeing students learned the information necessary for their credential. This focus or shift may work in combatting academic misconduct on an assessment, but it fails to address building a culture that encourages academic integrity. It also does not help students find growth from mistakes.

The International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) uses a positive orientation to define academic integrity based on its components: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage ([ICAI], 2021). Eaton (2024) noted that many definitions of academic integrity include "values and principles with decision-making and actions" (p. 3). While Eaton was focused on the decolonization of academic integrity, she notes that the values of academic integrity from ICAI compliment the Indigenous principles of integrity: relationality, respect and reciprocity.

To create a definition of academic integrity that incorporated the necessity for valid assessment and embodied ethical decision making, these philosophies will be accounted for in this project. Specifically, academic integrity is defined as completing academic work in such a way that the instructor can confirm student learning because they can trust that the student's

work was completed in accordance with the assignment instruction and without an unfair advantage. Academic misconduct, or cheating, is a failure to uphold these standards, whether intended or not.

There are two reasons that intent is irrelevant to academic misconduct. First, the academic integrity policy related to this study does not differentiate between intent to engage in misconduct or not when determining student guilt, so students may be charged with academic misconduct and found in violation of academic integrity policy even if it was done unknowingly. Second, while a person's actions may be done with a positive intent, that does not mean their actions did not cause harm. Within the context of academic integrity, a student may wish to help their friend by providing a previous assignment, but by doing so, they cheated their peer of the opportunity to learn and cheated the rest of the students in the course by providing an unfair advantage to their friend. When students continuously engage in academic integrity, they should develop the skills to align their values and principles with their actions.

Importance of Academic Integrity

In 2004, Callahan wrote a book titled *The Cheating Culture: Why more Americans are doing wrong to get ahead*, where he found that

> This is a dark book in some ways. An increase in cheating reflects deep anxiety and insecurity in America nowadays, desperation even, as well as arrogance among the rich and cynicism among ordinary people. Many of the stories that follow are very troubling; some are tragic. And yet, there is real hope here, too. Much cheating, as we'll see, can be traced to conditions that we have the power to change—from how much security our economy affords people, to how well government polices business, to the ***ethical climate in our schools***.

Twenty-one years later, in an emerging post-truth era, public trust in government systems and higher education continues to erode, with only 36% of Americans have a great deal of confidence in higher education (Jones, 2024). As Walter Langer said, "People will believe a big lie sooner than a little one, and if you repeat it frequently enough, people will sooner or later

believe it." In a fight to know that is true and what is not, the ramifications of long-term cheating are pervasive in society. If people do not trust colleges and universities, they cannot trust that the students graduating from those institutions possess the qualifications they claim to have earned.

Academic integrity is the start of this downward spiral. Without academic integrity, people would have no faith in the bridges built by engineers or trust in the nurses administering medication. They would be unable to believe their lawyers billed their hours ethically, that teachers can credibly educate their children, or that their employees were not stealing. Academic misconduct is linked to workplace misconduct, with dishonest students being more likely to engage in conduct such as violating confidentiality requirements, leveraging unethical strategies to meet workplace objectives, giving bribes, verbally abusing workplace peers (Guerrero-Dib et al., 2020), and employee theft (Nonis & Swift, 2001).

Medical malpractice is also related to academic misconduct. Unethical nursing practices provides one such example (LaDuke, 2013), including theft of patient medicine for personal use (Hilbert, 1985). Further, this is not limited to nursing. Instead, dentists (Andrews, et al., 2007; Graham et al., 2016) and doctors (Bazoukis et al., 2020) have similar findings. The same "maladaptive personalities" that impact undergraduate misconduct (e.g., Machiavellianism) plague medical students and their likelihood of perpetuating academic and clinical misconduct (Veríssimo et al., 2022).

While academic journals provide the foundation for these tropes, popular media has also shown similar results with podcasts like Dr. Death, about Dr. Christopher Duntsch, a neurosurgeon accused of maiming and killing patients after facing significant conduct issues that went unreported at the University of Tennessee during his medical schooling (Beil, 2018). In 2024, a surgeon in Florida mistakenly removed a patient's liver instead of his spleen, the second

time the surgeon removed the incorrect organ, casting doubts on the surgeon's knowledge of human anatomy (Planas, 2024).

In positions of trust, people must have faith in the person responsible for their wellbeing and the care of their families. Given the prevalence of literature on academic misconduct in engineering programs (Harding et al., 2017), the links between academic misconduct and violating the engineering code of ethics (Harding et al., 2004), it is no surprise that the decision-making process for academic misconduct in engineering students is the same as for professional misconduct. Pre-service teachers are also linked to academic misconduct (DiPaulo, 2022), especially when their ethical judgement levels remain low (Ünal, 2011). As colleges and universities send adults out into the world, they should address unethical behavior in a way that helps students develop the tools necessary to make ethical decisions. Whether students are interested in business, medicine, engineering, or any other field, the links between their decision to engage in academic misconduct while in college is linked to future unethical behavior as a person and as a professional (Mulisa & Ebessa, 2021).

Academic Integrity Interventions

Academic integrity interventions could be considered before students engage in academic misconduct. Prevention strategies like pre-infraction academic integrity training modules have been studied fairly extensively, and while they are sometimes correlated to reduced engagement in academic misconduct, there have been no definite answers on their effectiveness at addressing academic misconduct (Stoesz & Yudintseva, 2018; Ives & Nehrkorn, 2019). The campus culture surrounding academic integrity can also be considered a pre-infraction intervention (McCabe & Trevino, 2002), but knowledge of academic integrity does not necessarily decrease academic misconduct (Ives & Nehrkorn, 2019). Classroom interventions linked to reduced cases of

academic misconduct include several discussions on academic integrity during the semester, a regret clause, and normalizing help-seeking (Vahid et al., 2023), while positive faculty-student relationships may also be considered a pre-infraction intervention that could reduce misconduct (Stearns, 2001).

Pre-infraction interventions may be linked to reduced academic misconduct, but they fail to eliminate it. As such, the process by which institutions address academic misconduct should be considered an academic integrity intervention. Unfortunately, there is little knowledge of such programs. However, the student conduct literature offers developmental discipline (Fueglein et al., 2012) as the foil to academic integrity's teaching and learning approach. This study can build into the literature surrounding academic integrity responses as an intervention by applying student conduct principles in the practices of upholding academic integrity.

Interventions for academic integrity go beyond the process of finding a student guilty or innocent of engaging in academic misconduct. After a student has been found responsible for academic misconduct, some institutions now offer educational programming. The most recent study into post-infraction interventions took place in 2023 when researchers sought to understand the effect of an academic integrity intervention on student moral development (Stephens & Bertram Gallant, 2023). There is little additional research on the effectiveness of post-infraction interventions. In fact, it is only since the 2020s that Bertram Gallant and Stephens (2020) considered the developmental approach—which incorporates education with accountability. They later found that a developmental approach may have an impact on moral development (Stephens & Bertram Gallant, 2023). Researchers in Australia, leaders in academic integrity research, also reflect on the impact of developmental approaches (Fudge et al., 2022). However, most previous literature focuses on how to help students avoid academic misconduct, and

interventions like this have proliferated over time (Curtis et al., 2022). Thus, the literature surrounding student conduct as a whole, of which academic conduct acts as a subset, is relevant in determining effective responses to misconduct.

The Study of an Academic Integrity Intervention

Interventions that occur during the adjudication of possible misconduct and that educate students after an act of academic misconduct have not been widely researched for their impact. This study attempted to examine whether and how one academic integrity process—including its post-infraction *Remediation Program*—changed students. The study was designed to address the following research questions:

> *RQ 1: What is the relationship between restorative justice-based academic integrity processes like the Remediation Program and student moral decision-making?*
>
> *RQ 2: What is the relationship between restorative justice-based academic integrity processes like the Remediation Program and student recidivism in academic misconduct?*
>
> *RQ 3: How do students who engage in academic misconduct regardless of program participation describe their experiences and perceptions of the academic integrity process?*
>
> *RQ 4: How do restorative justice practices shape student perceptions of academic integrity post-infraction?*

These questions require a multipronged approach to study the impact of such an academic integrity process at one institution in the southeast. Southeast University (SEU), the case under study, altered its academic integrity policy in 2000 to include an alternative dispute resolution model grounded in restorative justice practices, and it revised that policy to include its *Remediation Program* in the summer of 2022. Writing the program into its academic integrity

policy, Southeast University incentivizes—rather than requires—student participation in the program after students have committed academic misconduct. To fully understand the impact of the *Remediation Program*, a mixed methods case study was attempted. This study was designed to look at four different student groups: 1) students who had never interacted with the Academic Integrity Office (AIO) or received an AIO record, 2) students who had an AIO record, but had not engaged with the post-infraction *Remediation Program*, 3) students who had an AIO record and had attempted but failed to complete the *Remediation Program*, and 4) students who had an AIO record and completed the *Remediation Program*. Students do self-select into the program and must be driven to complete the program, so understanding the differences between these groups could help describe whether these programs successfully build student moral decision-making and reduce recidivism in addition to explaining how to reduce self-selection issues.

The case was chosen for its application of restorative justice practices within its academic integrity adjudication process and its relatively new *Remediation Program*. Because restorative justice practices may vary so widely in implementation between institutions (Wong et al., 2016), I focused on an intrinsic case study, as it offered the best starting point for reviewing academic integrity interventions. This allowed me to parse out which stages in the academic integrity process impacted students and why. Further, it provided a way to categorize the different types of impacts on students as they moved through the academic integrity process.

In the end, the study had to be adjusted as a direct result of a lack of survey responses from the four different student groups. In addition, the focus of the study was originally focused on the *Remediation Program* as the key potential change agent within the academic integrity process. However, upon conducting the study, it quickly became clear that the scope of the entire

academic integrity process had a role in the student experience. As a result of survey difficulties and evidence from the data, the research questions were adjusted to the following:

> *Q_1: What, if any, differences exist between students who experience the academic integrity process at SEU and those who do not?*
>
> *Q_2: How do students who have received an AIO record describe their experiences and perceptions of the academic integrity process?*
>
> *Q_3: How do restorative justice practices within an academic integrity process shape students' perception of academic integrity?*

These updated questions better reflect the substance of the study conducted after it was constrained by data collection.

The results show that there is some relationship between restorative justice-based practices and both student moral development and recidivism. Students who engage in the academic integrity process at its bare minimum showed little signs of moral decision-making development. Instead, it was only with sustained contact with the academic integrity process that moral disruptors caused enough moral dissonance to help students change their perceptions of academic integrity and explain their changes towards academic work.

Contributions to Academic Integrity Literature

An institution's interventions for addressing academic misconduct with students after they have been accused of cheating has not been widely studied. This is a critical missing piece into understanding what disciplinary techniques are effective at encouraging active engagement in pre-infraction interventions to reduce allegations of academic misconduct before they take place and discourage recidivism in students who have engaged in and been reported for academic

misconduct. This study offers a look at one intervention that uses restorative justice-based practices during its academic integrity process.

Further, post-infraction interventions, such as educational programs, have not been evaluated for effectiveness. As more of these programs are launched, it is crucial for institutions to understand whether they are worth pursuing. Otherwise, institutions would be throwing their limited resources at a problem without understanding what solution is needed and how it can be adapted appropriately within their institutional context.

There are clear limits in the current academic integrity literature, but with the expansion of quasi-experimental design and student development literature being available for academic integrity researchers, there is hope that these issues will become a priority for researchers moving forward. As the research in academic integrity continues to focus on academic misconduct behaviors by students, practices to reduce misconduct will naturally follow. Understanding which practices are and are not effective are critical as institutions continue to face challenges to both their legitimacy in the eyes of American society and their wallets.

Study Roadmap

In the next chapter, I review the literature and theories that surround academic integrity. I consider the various reasons why students engage in academic misconduct and the various types of academic misconduct that have surged over time. Then, I examine the interventions that exist for academic misconduct and how student conduct literature contributes to the understanding of addressing academic misconduct. It is through student conduct literature that we see the use of restorative justice-based practices in changing student behavior. I end the chapter by discussing moral decision-making. Because moral judgement and moral disengagement are both strongly linked to student self-reported cheating behaviors (Perry et al., 2025), moral decision-making is

one area for an academic integrity process to serve as an intervention to reduce future misconduct. This leads to the theoretical framework for this study, the Model of Transformational Change (MTC) (Neumeister, 2017).

Chapter three goes through the methodology used in the study. As an intrinsic case study, mixed methods were used to integrate and triangulate the data. I review the challenges in data collection and the processes that were utilized in data analysis. The case is described in detail in Chapter four, including where the academic integrity process at SEU could cause moral disruption within the MTC framework.

Findings are explained in chapter five. Here, students that go through the academic integrity process are divided into four subgroups based on their engagement with moral disrupters. Never Engagers, Reluctant Engagers, Active Engagers, and Transformers work through different levels of academic integrity process and have different experiences within those processes. Regardless, moral disruption took place for these students, and there were some differences between students that had engaged with the academic integrity process and those that had not.

Concluding thoughts and implications for policy and practice are addressed in Chapter six. MTC was useful as a theoretical framework, and its use in this study enabled better connections between theory and practice. The findings were striking, and they tell us that negative emotions (i.e., shame, embarrassment, etc.) from students engaging with the academic integrity process can overtake potential for moral decision-making development if it is not coupled with support. However, there is some evidence to suggest that going through the academic integrity process does change student behavior. This has striking implications for policy and practice, and academic integrity practitioners may find that implementing restorative

justice-based practices in their policies and procedures can lead to greater student moral decision-making.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY

Academic integrity research has progressed since its introduction in the American higher education ecosystem by Bill Bowers (1964). Originally, most of the literature focused on the causes of student academic misconduct. The contextual and individual factors that correlated to increased cheating behaviors remain a topic of interest today. From the early 1990s (McCabe, 1992) to the present (Perry et al., 2025; Rettinger et al., 2024), researchers have sought to understand why students commit academic misconduct as a way to facilitate better prevention and intervention strategies.

Prevention strategies are the most common intervention studied in the academic integrity space (Ives & Nehrkorn, 2019; Stoesz & Yudintseva, 2018). Processes for handling cases of alleged academic misconduct were not foci of the literature (e.g., Bertram Gallant & Stephens, 2020; Cullen, 2022), thus the field relies on student conduct literature to determine case resolution strategies (e.g., Fueglein et al., 2012; Karp & Conrad, 2005). In addition, to date, none of the scholarly literature on academic integrity and misconduct has examined the impact of restorative justice-based programming in a post-infraction intervention. As institutions look to offer educational programming to remediate students that have engaged in cheating behaviors, it is vital that such post-infraction interventions are studied for their impact on student moral development. As such, I delved into the types, causes, and theories of student academic misconduct, and the ways that higher education addressed academic misconduct to understand what, if any, changes took place after students engaged with the Academic Integrity Office,

including participation in a *Remediation Program* after receiving an academic misconduct record. Further, I reviewed theories of moral development, criminal justice, and student conduct to create a framework for studying the academic integrity process and its associated post-infraction intervention.

Why Students Cheat

Traditionally, research into academic integrity topics centered on collegiate student misconduct (e.g., McCabe, 1992; McCabe, 2005; McCabe et al., 2012), though there are some forays into student academic misconduct at the K-12 levels (e.g., Anderman & Midgley, 2004; McCabe, 1999). There is a difference between academic integrity, understood to be academic work that is related to student progression through their degree, and educational integrity. Educational integrity is "multi-dimensional and is enabled by all those in the educational enterprise, from students to teachers, librarians, advisors, research colleagues and administrators" (Asia Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity (APFEI) as cited in Bretag, 2016). Because I focus on a post-infraction academic integrity intervention for undergraduate students, I will exclusively refer to academic integrity.

Literature surrounding academic integrity was historically focused on the contextual and individual factors related to academic misconduct. Why students engage in academic misconduct was the driving question for many researchers. There are myriad models and frameworks for understanding the complex decision-making in which students engage as they commit academic misconduct. Exploring such research and focusing on the frameworks researchers have put forward to explain student academic misconduct, this review of the literature serves as a roadmap for the academic integrity research that has taken place since the 1900s. In addition to the why of academic misconduct, researchers have also been interested in differentiating the

types of misconduct and specific understandings of student decision-making related to that behavior.

Contextual and Individual Factors Related to Academic Misconduct

Most literature on academic integrity has centered on the rates of academic misconduct and why students engage in academic misconduct. The foundational factors to explain student academic misconduct was built on Don McCabe's surveys in the 1990s and 2000s. When Bowers (1964) wrote his dissertation, he relied on studies conducted in the 1920s and 1930s about the engagement in deceit and honor code systems within few institutions. Bowers broadened the scope of previous literature in the first nationwide understanding of student engagement in academic misconduct. He examined the individual and institutional characteristics of academic misconduct in his survey of 5000 students at 99 institutions. Bowers was the first to report that students who graduate from college were "more likely than not to have [cheated] since coming to college…using cheating as an occasional supplementary measure for improving one's academic record…" (pg. 276-77).

Don McCabe used Bower's (1964) questionnaire to develop a scale of academic misconduct and its associated behaviors in the 1990s, and he continued to study academic misconduct for more than 30 years. McCabe's early research touched on situational ethics and academic misconduct (McCabe, 1992), the influence of honor codes on faculty responses to academic misconduct (McCabe, 1993), gender in academic misconduct (McCabe & Bowers, 1994), longitudinal trends in academic misconduct (McCabe & Trevino, 1996), individual and contextual influences on academic misconduct (McCabe & Trevino, 1997), and the difference in academic misconduct rates between honor code and non-honor code institutions (McCabe et al., 1999).

McCabe continued this research into the 2000s and 2010s (e.g., D. McCabe et al., 2001; McCabe, 2005; McCabe & Trevino, 2002; D. L. McCabe et al., 2001b) before summarizing 30 years of research in the book *Cheating in College: Why Students Do It and What Educators Can Do About It*. According to McCabe, Butterfield, and Treviño (2012), students commit academic misconduct based on individual factors (e.g., age, GPA, extracurricular activity, and DIT scores), institutional factors (e.g., honor codes), peer influences (e.g., peer attitudes and beliefs), and classroom factors (e.g., academic motivation).

Lang (2013) built on McCabe's work by focusing on classroom factors, describing four aspects of the classroom environment that can promote academic misconduct: emphasizing performance over mastery, high-stakes assessment practices, extrinsic motivation, and low self-efficacy. While Lang (2013) and McCabe et al. (2012) both agree that an honor code is an effective way to reduce academic misconduct, they also emphasize that "…what reduces cheating on an honor code campus is not the code itself, but the dialogue about academic honesty that the code inspires" (Lang, 2013, p. 172). The honor code does not reduce academic misconduct, but a campus culture of academic integrity does (McCabe & Trevino, 2002; Rettinger et al., 2024).

Psychological Constructs and Academic Misconduct

The psychological characteristics of students considered when addressing why students commit academic misconduct are vast and varied. Academic motivation and its ties to academic misconduct have also been studied. Peled et al. (2019) linked motivational orientation in the classroom, personality traits, attitudes towards academic misconduct, and socio-demographics to academic misconduct. Anderman et al. (2022) showed how attribution theory, achievement goal theory, social cognitive theory, situated expectancy-value theory, and self-determination theory

link to academic misconduct behaviors by reviewing the attributes that may be indicative of future academic misconduct. When students felt in control and stable, there was less self-reported academic misconduct. Similarly, a mastery approach was tied to more academic integrity while a performance approach was tied to greater academic misconduct. Finally, when students have higher rates of self-efficacy, they report lower rates of academic misconduct.

Student self-control is one catalyst for determining whether a student was likely to commit academic misconduct, with lower rates of self-control linked to increased academic misconduct (Yu et al., 2018). Cognitive dissonance and neutralizing attitudes (Stephens, 2017; Whitley, 1998) are also linked to increases in student academic misconduct. Shu et al. (2011), looked at how moral development was dependent on a variety of factors, finding that an individual's "dishonest behavior increased moral disengagement and motivated forgetting of moral rules;" they also found that having students "read or sign an honor code significantly reduced unethical behavior and prevented subsequent moral disengagement" (p. 330). Stephens (2018) found that moral judgment, moral responsibility, and moral disengagement are interrelated to academic misconduct.

Ajzen (1991) also studied academic misconduct and found that academic misconduct can be constructed as a planned behavior; when planned behavior is coupled with moral obligation, it can predict academic misconduct. One example includes research by Uzun and Kilis (2020), which found that past behavior and moral obligation had the strongest ties to understanding behavioral intention towards plagiarism. Yu et al. (2021) also used planned behavior and found that attitudes towards academic misconduct positively related to student academic cheating and planning to engage in misconduct. The study of academic misconduct was also informed by

criminology. Burke and Sanney (2018) related to the fraud triangle as contributive indicators of academic misconduct:

> First, students perceive some urgency about their grades…Second, students are afforded an opportunity to cheat in a variety of formats. Third, students rationalize that it is acceptable to take advantage of these opportunities to cheat for any number of reasons. (p. 12)

Similarly, Sharma et al. (2023) found that pressure, opportunity, and rationalization were linked to increases in academic misconduct.

In comparing academic misconduct to criminal behavior, Srirejeki et al. (2023) linked increases in academic fraud to Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. These three components created individuals that were able to manipulate others for self-gain and whose drive to "maintain inflated self-views might push [them] to ignore ethical norms" (p. 151). This lack of empathy and desire for self-gain was bolstered by risk-seeking behavior, but it was possible to contain the fraud triangle and dark triad using deterrence and strain.

Freiburger et al. (2017) attempted to find the cause of increased academic misconduct as related to strain and self-control. They believed that "…increased rate of overall life stressors increased the frequency of cheating behaviors, suggesting a cumulative effect of strain as a function over overall diminished coping capabilities" (p. 225). When students were under strain, lacked self-control, and had no significant deterrent to academic misconduct, there was a significant chance that they would commit academic misconduct.

Perception of deterrence, strain, and rational choice—all these factors played a role into increased of student academic misconduct. Michaels and Miethe (1989) and Nagy and Groves (2021) both discovered links between these different psychological factors and academic misconduct. This may be because deterrence, self-efficacy, self-control, and norms all influenced rational choice. Ogilvie and Stewart (2010) integrated rational choice with self-efficacy through

deterrence, finding that "…the effects of sanction threats on intentions to offend are partly mediated by individual-level characteristics" as they related to engagement in academic misconduct (p. 136). In other words, self-efficacy moderated the impact of deterrence on plagiarism. Yu et al. (2018) found self-control to be foundational to academic misconduct, but Tibbetts and Myers (1999) found that while self-control had a bivariate relationship with academic misconduct, it had no significant relationship when controlling for other factors, especially shame.

Settler et al. (2013) expanded rational choice to include norms because they believed that individuals chose to act in alignment with norms that maximized utility; therefore, academic misconduct could be considered rational. Perceived opportunities and norms impacted the student's choice to engage in academic misconduct, so a strict interpretation of rational choice does not work. Walters and Morgan (2018) contextualized rational choice within criminal lifestyle, and they found that certainty of punishment was a stronger predictor of academic misconduct than what or how a student thinks about crime.

Rational choice impacted students' decisions to engage in academic misconduct and plays a role in the many different forms of academic misconduct. For example, when looking at collaborative academic misconduct, Briggs et al. (2013) showed that "…peer dynamics influence the conditions that make collaborative cheating more likely and may even encourage more individual cheating, in the sense that shirking by a team member is a form of individual cheating" (p. 12). Meanwhile, Woessner (2004) argued that insufficient penalties for academic misconduct actually encouraged increased plagiarism. When the expected value of plagiarized work is a higher grade—even with a low penalty if caught plagiarizing—it was better to attempt plagiarism than to submit authentic work that was guaranteed to score lower. Henkel and Haen

(2012) found that self-interest and rational choice extend to whistleblowing behaviors; students are more likely to become a whistleblower on peer academic misconduct when they received extra credit for doing so. Institutional culture related to academic integrity creates the perceived opportunity to commit academic misconduct.

Institutional Factors

The institutionalization of academic integrity on campus is also related to academic misconduct (McCabe et al., 2012; Lang, 2013). Such institutionalization took place when there were structural indicators (e.g., an office of academic integrity) to address academic misconduct when it occurred, procedural indicators existed via an academic integrity policy, and these structural and procedural indicators were supported culturally by the involvement and support of an institution's faculty, students, and administration (Bertram Gallant & Drinan, 2006; Bertram Gallant & Drinan, 2008; Kibler, 1993). Institutional commitment to the academic integrity policy and use of embedded academic integrity structures were indicators of the institutional culture of academic integrity via institutionalization into an organization. Such institutionalization was often driven by institutional policies and processes related to academic integrity. Tracey Bretag worked with teams to decode policies and what made them more or less successful (Bretag & Mahmud, 2016; Bretag et al., 2011). Bretag's analysis of the academic integrity policies from 39 Australian tertiary institutions led to the creation of the five core elements of exemplary policy: access, approach, responsibility, detail, and support (Bretag et al., 2011).

While the support of all stakeholders is critical to the institutionalization of academic integrity into a campus, faculty play a key role in developing student buy-in. When faculty previously endured a bad experience upholding academic integrity, they were less likely to report academic misconduct in the future (Coren, 2011), and faculty faced additional hours of labor and

administrative red tape to bring forward cases of academic misconduct (Coalter et al., 2007; MacLeod & Eaton, 2020). However, there was a benefit when faculty engaged in upholding academic integrity related to student perception; students who believed faculty would report academic misconduct and that they would face a consequence for engaging in academic misconduct were less likely to engage in cheating behaviors (McCabe et al., 2003; McCabe & Trevino, 1993; D. L. McCabe et al., 2001a; Simon et al., 2003).

Individual Factors

Some research looked to specific individual characteristics tied to academic misconduct. For example, international students were often associated with higher rates of plagiarism, which is attributed to alternative cultural values or a lack of English language proficiency (Sowden, 2004). Pecorari (2003) looked at this issue for non-native English speakers in their dissertations. She found that all the study subjects "gave a misleading impression of their source use" (p. 333), and almost all subjects had text matches up to 70% with their sources without including a citation or quotation marks.

Other individual characteristics related to higher rates of academic misconduct included student employment, rates of financial support from supporters, housing locations, and gender (Whitley, 1998; McCabe et al., 2012). Previous results suggested that men were more willing than women to admit to cheating, perhaps because men felt less guilt over it (Whitley, 1998). Such links, however, have narrowed over time. As female students engaged in historically male-dominated fields, they began to engage in academic misconduct at similar rates (McCabe et al., 2012).

Academic misconduct is also related to age. Younger, unmarried students engaged in academic misconduct more than older, married students (McCabe et al., 2012; Whitley, 1998).

Power (2009) also found that students were less likely to engage in plagiarism as they got closer to graduation. Power (2009) specifically studied plagiarism in first- and second-year students because they were socialized into academic misconduct from high school and had not yet reached the age where their views aligned with their faculty. In addition, Power found that students had more to lose after they had invested multiple years into their education.

There were many reasons why a student may commit academic misconduct. Some were more strongly correlated to academic misconduct than others, but existing research provided useful insight into better understanding academic misconduct behaviors. This included research into academic misconduct that is narrower in focus. By limiting the scope regarding the type of academic misconduct, researchers could pinpoint certain aspects of that form of academic misconduct.

Differentiating Academic Misconduct

Research on academic integrity had blossomed since the 1990s, with specific forms of misconduct studied exclusively. Plagiarism was one such example of a narrowed focus. Some researchers focused on plagiarism policy (Bretag, 2004; Foltýnek & Glendinning, 2015; Mahmud et al., 2018) and how students understood it (Adam et al., 2017). Others looked at the motivation for student plagiarism and how to counter it through education (Bretag et al., 2014; Brown & Howell, 2001; Compton & Pfau, 2008) or reduce it (Belter & du Pré, 2009). Power (2009) investigated how students experienced plagiarism, including its status as a moral issue. Likewise, Pecorari (2003) analyzed writing samples for non-native English speakers to their source materials in addition to interviewing participants.

Out of plagiarism literature, contract cheating—academic misconduct where a student exchanges some good or service for academic work, most typically seen as essay writing

services and online “tutoring” services—became a source of interest in the 2010s (Lancaster & Clarke, 2016; Walker & Townly, 2012). Australia became a leader in contract cheating research and policy, with its government implementing a law against contract cheating service providers (Ross, 2019). Teams of researchers looked at which assessment types have the lowest rates of contract cheating (Bretag, Harper, Burton, Ellis, Newton, Rozenberg, et al., 2019; Ellis et al., 2020), surveyed university staff (Harper et al., 2019) and students (Bretag, Harper, Burton, Ellis, Newton, van Haeringen, et al., 2019), and sought to learn the rates at which students engaged in contract cheating (Curtis & Clare, 2017). The ways in which contract cheating companies engage students online through social media (Amigud, 2020; Amigud & Lancaster, 2020), micro-outsourcing (Lancaster, 2020), and online business models (Awdry, 2021) have also been studied to explain the proliferation of these services.

The Internet has been a major source of academic misconduct research. Lathrop and Foss (2000) focused on the facilitation of plagiarism by the Internet. Others looked at peer-to-peer file sharing as a facilitation method for academic misconduct (Rogerson & Basanta, 2016) and how common academic misconduct was in online exams (Newton & Essex, 2023). Stephens et al. (2007) wanted to know what made online learning different and investigated student beliefs about cheating online, finding that while there was little difference between digital and traditional academic misconduct, both types of misconduct were related to moral disengagement.

Today, the Internet makes information more easily accessible than ever before. With the widescale access to generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) after OpenAccess’s release of ChatGPT in November 2022, an uptick in research on academic misconduct via GenAI emerged. Student access to artificial intelligence for academic work was dubbed this the era of postplagiarism, “an era in human society and culture in which advanced technologies such as

artificial intelligence and neurotechnology, including brain-computer interfaces (BCIs), become a normal part of life, including how we teach, learn, communicate, and interact on a daily basis" (Eaton, 2023). The majority of the early research focused on the effectiveness of artificial intelligence detection software were designed by using human generated, human-artificial intelligence co-generated, and artificial intelligence generated work to determine the accuracy of an AI detector in identifying work generated all or in part by artificial intelligence (Elkhatat et al., 2023; Weber-Wulff et al., 2023). Findings varied based on detector, length of submission, and humanizing efforts (e.g., paraphrasing tools or additional text spinners). Still, some studies look to see how well other humans can detect submissions of GenAI in academic work (Liu et al., 2024; Revell et al., 2024).

More and more, post-plagiarism research is looking at the impact of GenAI on academic misconduct, including using previous frameworks to understand student engagement in academic misconduct using GenAI. For example, Birks and Clare (2023) argued that like other forms of academic misconduct, prevention rather than apprehension was a better approach to addressing improper use of GenAI. Student perspectives on GenAI showed that students may not always understand when GenAI use crossed the line into academic fraud, necessitating institutional policies on GenAI to clarify when and how students could engage with GenAI within their academic work (Johnston et al., 2024). Acosta-Enriquez et al. (2024) found that perceived ethics and student concern about GenAI were linked to academic misconduct with GenAI; while overall viewing GenAI as positive, they found that students lacked direction in what constituted ethical use of GenAI and recommended developing educational interventions to train students. Though discourse can be helpful in framing the conversation around GenAI in the classroom and

on academic work, structural change to assessment practices in needed to ensure valid assessment of student learning (Corbin et al., 2025).

The reasons students engage in academic misconduct were as varied and plentiful as the types of academic misconduct that exist. How those reasons interact and mediate or are moderated has been and continues to be a fruitful and important area of research. If academic integrity is vital for institutional credibility and serves as a predictor for future behavior, the research will continue. Reactions to academic misconduct from faculty and institutions require some additional insight. Regardless of the egregiousness of an act of academic misconduct, students in the U.S. have due process rights for how cases of alleged misconduct are processed. Stevens (1996) discusses the possibility of an informal resolution model, but notes that while the letter of due process can be met, the spirit of due process can be violated when the decisionmaker is not impartial. Stevens sets the stage for the different institutional approaches to academic misconduct.

Responding to Academic Misconduct

There are three periods to consider when dealing with academic misconduct. First, there are opportunities to educate students before they commit academic misconduct; these are prevention efforts. Within this window, institutions and faculty could provide education and outreach that would stop students from engaging in academic misconduct. Second, institutions must handle cases of alleged misconduct. They must determine whether the student has committed academic misconduct and, if so, the appropriate response. Finally, there is an opportunity after a student has been found responsible for academic misconduct to enact an academic integrity intervention, such as an educational program, designed to reduce recidivism. I reviewed the literature for each period, with one distinct qualification: academic conduct is often

considered part of the code of student conduct which is handled by an institution's student conduct office. The overlap between academic integrity and student conduct in handling cases of alleged misconduct, led me to consult student conduct literature.

Prevention Interventions: Stopping Academic Misconduct Before It Happens

Addressing academic misconduct remains a concern for higher education. Some institutions provided educational interventions designed to stop academic misconduct before it takes place or detect misconduct when it occurs. Interventions of this type have varied results (Stoesz & Yudintseva, 2018; Ives & Nehrkorn, 2019). Ives and Nehrkorn (2019) reviewed interventions to prevent and detect academic misconduct and found that from 1927 – 2017 only 97 papers addressed interventions. Plagiarism instruction interventions and other similar interventions did increase student knowledge of academic integrity; however, its impact remained inconclusive. There was no evidence such interventions were the cause of changes to student attitudes towards plagiarism or reduction student engagement in plagiarism. In addition, educational interventions failed to include designs to determine causality; rather, the studies were correlational, reducing the applicability of the findings. Similarly, exam proctoring found no compelling evidence of reducing academic misconduct, with half the studies finding no difference in student academic conduct.

Stoesz and Yudintseva (2018) focused on twenty-one interventions. Like Ives and Nehrkorn, they reviewed articles related to academic integrity interventions on "…face-to-face workshops, elearning tutorials, or blended approaches for promoting academic integrity and the effectiveness of these approaches" (p. 1). They found that the interventions described as satisfactorily effective did have changes in students' attitudes and knowledge related to academic

integrity. They also pointed to a struggle in locating evidence that the educational interventions caused changes in student behavior after completion.

Elander et al. (2010) looked at the improvement of student authorial identity to reduce plagiarism. They conducted an experiment where psychology students received an intervention focused on developing authorial identity; it delivered a pre- and post- test called the Student Authorship Questionnaire to determine if there were changes in student writing. They found that the intervention increased student writing confidence, helping them understand how to avoid plagiarism. Further, the authors used direct evaluative feedback to find that nearly all students believed the intervention would successfully help them avoid plagiarism and over half believed it made them better writers. Using focus groups to further delve into the effects of the treatment, they found that the intervention altered perceptions on the meaning of authorial identity and how to write for collegiate courses.

Dee and Jacob (2012) provided insight into a different intervention: they looked at a web-based module to reduce plagiarism in undergraduate courses. They administered an online tutorial to randomly assigned courses three weeks into the semester that contained information on what plagiarism was and how to avoid it, and then they used Turnitin to see text matching between the treated and control students. They found that not only did the tutorial reduce text matching, it also "…has the largest impact on lower-ability students" (p. 427).

Developing a culture of academic integrity is also associated with reduced academic misconduct (McCabe & Trevino, 2002). McCabe noted that it is not just the presence of an honor code, but the culture of the honor code at an institution that makes the difference. When Ives and Nehrkorn (2019) considered honor codes as a pre-infraction intervention, they confirmed that it did not reliably reduce academic misconduct unless the honor code corresponded to a culture of

integrity. Academic integrity training is one avenue to build such a culture, but of the ten studies found by Ives and Nehrkorn (2019), there was again an increase in student knowledge about academic integrity but not necessarily a decrease in academic misconduct.

More recent studies appeared more positive about the impact of pre-infraction educational modules, suggesting that changed attitudes towards academic integrity and not just increased student understanding of academic conduct: “Taken together, it could be argued that students do not develop character, in the context of academic integrity, just by being told to be of good character; they must be taught how to be of good character” (Curtis, 2022, p. 30). One early example by Belter and du Pré (2009) used pre-intervention and a pre- / post- evaluation to see if their academic integrity module reduced plagiarism. They found that 26% of students who had not completed the module plagiarized compared to 7% of the students who had completed the module.

Curtis et al. (2022) referenced longitudinal studies to show the impact of interventions over time. Levine and Pazdernik (2018) looked at the role of text-matching, educational modules, student tasks, and policy changes while Perkins et al. (2020) focused on the impact of one course on academic integrity. All three studies found a reduction in cases of academic misconduct over five years. In a separate study comparing academic integrity education programs, Sefcik et al. (2020) looked at the differences in academic integrity programs between institutions in Australia and New Zealand using a survey and semi-structured interviews.

Classroom management experiments and quasi-experiments conducted to reduce academic misconduct reviewed pedagogical approaches, including: a discussion of academic integrity two or three weeks into the semester, an academic integrity quiz, a regret policy that lets students retract work that may have a violation before it is graded, and normalizing help-seeking

behavior have had success in reducing cases of academic misconduct (Vahid et al., 2023). Stearns (2001), on the other hand, focused on how a positive student-instructor relationship can reduce academic misconduct. Finally, instructor appeals to morality and invoking fear by threats of consequences found no significant changes in academic misconduct (Spear & Miller, 2012).

Though an academic integrity culture ties to reduced numbers of students self-reporting academic misconduct, it is important to understand that an honor code alone will not build that culture (Curtis, 2022; Ives & Nehrkorn, 2019; McCabe and Trevino, 2002). It is only when combining interventions with educational training and other factors that there is minimal evidence for a shift in student behavior. While pre-infraction interventions may reduce academic misconduct, they remained unable to eliminate it. Because no prevention was 100% effective, institutions require some policy and procedure that addressed the management of academic misconduct when it occurred.

Handling Cases of Alleged Academic Misconduct

Institutions must address suspected academic misconduct. Failure to address academic misconduct is linked to increased academic misconduct by virtue of creating a culture of cheating (McCabe et al., 2012; Rettinger et al., 2024). Cases of alleged academic misconduct must be brought forward and responsibility for the accusation must be determined before any penalties could be imposed.

Processes and Approaches

Reactions to academic misconduct from faculty and institutions require some additional insight. Regardless of the egregiousness of an act of academic misconduct, students in the U.S. have due process rights for how cases of alleged misconduct are processed. Stevens (1996) discussed the possibility of an informal resolution model, but they noted that meeting the letter of

due process could still violate the spirit of due process when the decisionmaker is not independent. Thus, different institutional approaches to academic misconduct existed to address these concerns.

Bretag and Mahmud (2016) discussed the five core elements of exemplary academic integrity policy: access, approach, responsibility, detail, and support. Two of these elements, approach and detail, related to how institutions reacted to academic misconduct after it occurred. In the first comprehensive review of academic integrity policies in the United States, Cullen and Murphy (2025) found that while many institutions espoused a restorative justice or teaching and learning approach to academic integrity in the introduction, the details of the policy fail to follow through on this approach in lieu of protecting the institution from litigious concerns. For example, an institution discussed its educative orientation to academic integrity in the preamble of their academic integrity policy, but the procedure for handling alleged misconduct mirrored a criminal justice process, complete with a jury of peers determining the outcome. While due process is vital and must be afforded to students ("Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education," 1961), the right to know the charges, have a hearing, and the right to defend oneself do not guarantee any greater justice, relying more on determining guilt than developing students (Bertram Gallant & Stephens, 2020).

Similarly, student conduct offices must balance the educational needs and ethos of the university with maintaining due process rights for students (Gehring, 2001). Due process in student conduct at colleges and universities was affirmed by the courts; students do have rights but not to the extent of a full trial or criminal proceeding. Alternative dispute resolution processes may ensure that the student conduct process need not be an adversarial process. Emmanuel and Miser (1987) defined educational outcomes for student conduct or student

judicial systems and how researchers should consider evaluating conduct processes. Using this framework, Howell (2005) found that:

> Broad agreement seems to exist in the student affairs and judicial affairs literature regarding the purposes of campus judicial systems: (a) to promote and protect an academic community where learning is valued and encouraged, and (b) to promote citizenship education and moral and ethical development for those who are involved in the judicial process, either by way of violation or implementation. (p. 374)

King (2012) would agree, showing a strong correlation between perceived fairness and educational value in the student conduct process.

Once a student has either admitted to committing academic misconduct or been found responsible for academic misconduct by their institutional process, consequences or sanctions are imposed. There may be a sanction in the course (e.g., failure of assignment, failure of the course) or from the institution (e.g., notation of violation on transcript, separation from the institution), but depending on the process there is greater opportunity to for educational outcomes or a developmental approach.

Sanctioning Models and Outcomes

Student conduct literature opens a door to the impact of developmental disciplinary techniques. Fueglein et al. (2012) defines developmental discipline as one designed to both protect the institution from lawsuits while using "student development theory, creative sanctions, and learning outcomes into the policy-based discipline setting" (p. 2). This led to the development the EPIC Journey Sanctioning model, which provided the following learning outcomes for students:

> (a) develop enhanced awareness of self, (b) identify and utilize support networks, (c) recognize their sanctions as a personalized journey, (d) take an active role in their development, (e) integrate their knowledge between their choices and their desire to succeed, (f) reduce the discrepancies between their choices and their desire to succeed, (g) articulate their willingness and confidence to change, and (h) accept ownership over their college experience. (Fueglein et al., 2012, p. 4)

EPIC Journey Sanctioning relied on active and inactive sanctioning with student input as part of a motivational interview designed to help students change their behavior by engaging in empathetic expression and evaluating the gaps between student goals and their current behavior (Branscum & Sharma, 2010).

Built around having a productive conversation that helps students build their own self-efficacy rather than being confrontational, Branscum and Sharma (2010) found motivational interviewing alone to be effective at reducing "alcohol use and drinking problems" (p. 73). Fueglein et al. (2012) found that using motivational interviewing to reach the sanctions through the EPIC Journey Model was successful in increasing student engagement on campus, matching actions with goals, improving interpersonal relationships, and taking steps to match the values of the community.

Ashley and Miller (2022) chose to implement a similar sanctioning model after misconduct occurred; they called this model the Pathway Plan. This sanctioning strategy required student conduct professionals to work with students to develop sanction(s) that would help them learn and see how actions impacted the university rather than prescribing the same sanction to all students. Drawing on ideas of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2004) and Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), the Pathway Plan allowed students to work with the conduct administrator to help students change their approach to similar situations in the future. Not only did this lead to a better student experience because of the restorative justice nature of the process, the Pathway Plan led to a 45% drop in recidivism and fewer appeals filed.

Using Restorative Justice Practices in Resolving Misconduct

Restorative justice-based practices have been used in education and criminal justice for youth in a variety of contexts. Restorative justice offered a response to a crime where the

offender is confronted by the victim, takes responsibility for their actions, and re-enter society (Zehr, 1990). Bouffard et al. (2017) reviewed the implementation of restorative justice practices for juvenile offenders, finding that every type of restorative justice intervention (e.g., direct mediation, indirect mediation, panels, even "minimal involvement" where they do not get past first meeting) was more likely to reduce recidivism than a traditional court-like proceeding. There were positive impacts for attempting to implement restorative justice practices.

Wong et al. (2016) completed a comprehensive review of literature and found that generally, restorative justice programs reduced recidivism for youth offenders. There was concern about these studies because every program implemented restorative justice practices differently. However, they found that restorative justice programs were linked to causing less criminal behavior. Peterson Armour and colleagues (2005) studied a specific restorative justice program to determine its impact, and they found that those who completed the program had increased empathy, greater awareness of the impact of their actions on others, and improved self-management. In addition, the offenders completing the program were less likely to reoffend within nine months of their release. Such programs worked to help offenders develop skills to avoid future misconduct and could be applied in less criminal and more educational situations.

When restorative justice was used in a school setting, everyone impacted needed to be able to share their stories and to share in the outcome and responsibility for the offense. Restorative justice practices are relevant to academic integrity in higher education. Using Zehr (1990) as a model, mediation between an instructor and a student could yield fruitful dialogue, and restorative justice conferencing could reintegrate a student into the university community after they have committed academic misconduct.

Restorative justice was viewed as an opportunity for student conduct offices to promote student learning because it supported the student offender and every other individual impacted by the incident in addition to address systemic inequities (Sullivan & Witenstein, 2022). A large part of this may be tied to the perceived fairness of the process. Stimpson and Janosik (2015) believed that student conduct procedures framed student behavior and the learning environment, and they found that students were more likely to feel the process was educational when it felt fair. King (2012) also looked at the relationship between fairness and the educational value of the student process and found a positive relationship between perceived fairness and whether students found the process educational.

Karp and Conrad (2005) implemented a restorative justice system at Skidmore College. They used community boards designed to address emotional harm by providing an opportunity for students to apologize, address property harm through restitution, and respond to communal harm via service to the community. The boards shifted the onus of sanctions to the student rather than the college; "[o]ffender accountability is central, but balanced with a concern for reintegration which is defined by an offender's ability to regain trust through demonstrated good citizenship" (p. 317). After implementing the restorative justice process, they found that recidivism decreased.

Karp continued to investigate restorative justice practices in student conduct. Restorative justice practices provided balance between accountability for offender actions and rehabilitation through reintegration, Karp and Frank (2016) defined four steps for a restorative process to be considered successful: (1) establishing common ground by creating a space where all participants can be engaged; (2) identifying the violations impact together by finding the harm done by the violation; (3) repairing that harm and reintegrating the student into the campus community as

they "[w]ork together to identify the best way to fix the damage done…[and] ways that the responding student can demonstrate their commitment to the community and become more closely tied to the values and behaviors of a responsible community member"; and (4) ensure student success by building support systems through access to community and campus resources (p. 152).

Karp and Frank (2016) also provided goals for restorative justice in student conduct: creating a just community, building student self-authorship, engaging in active accountability, developing interpersonal competence, growing social ties to the institution, ensuring procedural fairness, and providing an avenue for closure. When examining the STARR Project in 2014, Karp and Sacks (2014) reviewed the impact of student conduct processes along the six goals for restorative justice. They found that not only did the process impact the outcomes on all six goals, but also that restorative justice practices had a greater impact at larger schools. Students perceived conduct processes that engage restorative justice practices as fairer, and greater student learning took place in restorative justice practices than in administrative hearings.

Applying restorative justice practices to student conduct, Gallagher Dahl et al. (2014) similarly found that restoratively motivated students were more satisfied and less likely to repeat a violation, but self-focused students reported feeling fewer benefits to the program. They also found that students motivated by the community felt more connected to the community after a Restorative Justice Conference (RJC), and the majority would participate in another RJC. Thus, restorative justice practices enhanced the developmental goals of student conduct offices.

Student conduct literature shows a definitive direction for academic integrity literature to expand. The ideas behind developmental discipline are in line with the teaching and learning approach to academic integrity. There is also a limit to what the student conduct literature

focuses on as an outcome: recidivism. While recidivism offers an indication of whether a student was *caught* continuing to engage in misconduct, it does not always mean that the behavior has stopped. Instead, it could mean that the behavior was better concealed, or—as in the case of drug or alcohol use—continued when students aged out of its being illegal or only committed such use in places that decriminalized the substances. Looking at recidivism as the only outcome that matters while not also considering student moral or ethical development is problematic.

Post-Infraction Academic Integrity Interventions

As more institutions turn away from punitive policies (Cullen, 2022), Bertram Gallant and Stephens (2020) reminded academic integrity practitioners that punishment is not enough. In this influential piece, Bertram Gallant and Stephens argue that there is the need for educational interventions post-infraction. They further investigated the impact of such an intervention, the first post-infraction intervention study in the academic integrity space and found that such interventions can impact a student's moral development (Stephens & Bertram Gallant, 2023).

Thus, academic integrity research should include evaluations of responses to academic misconduct and interventions that take place after an infraction. Unfortunately, there is little knowledge of such programs. The latest research into interventions offers the first post-infraction intervention study. Stephens and Bertram Gallant (2023) searched for the effect of an academic integrity intervention on student moral development. They found that the intervention did help students develop moral sensitivity.

Gaps in Previous Literature

While intervention evaluation is necessary, policy evaluation is a problematic area of study in academic integrity. Which types of academic integrity policies had the lowest instances of recidivism or correlated to the largest cultures of integrity is unknown. Though McCabe's

research on honor codes is foundational, there was no knowledge comparing alternative dispute resolution models to judiciary models, which restorative justice practices may impact student outcomes, or how the language in the policies themselves influences students and faculty.

There are other areas to explore in future academic integrity research. From the existing literature, it remains unclear which interventions substantially reduce academic misconduct. Further, for those interventions correlated to reduced misconduct, it is unclear what underlying mechanism is the catalyst that changes student behavior. Instead, institutions continue to throw ideas at a problem without understanding what would work to address the issues and why it would work within their campus context.

Finally, there has been little research into what happens to a student after they receive an academic integrity violation. Of particular interest to this study, the use of restorative justice-based practices in post-infraction interventions for academic integrity is vital to the field. Considering the importance of a sense of belonging in college, student engagement in the academic integrity procedures and the campus community after an accusation of academic misconduct is a mystery. So too is the impact of interventions that take place only after a student has committed academic misconduct. For post-infraction work, academic integrity professionals do not know if their programming is impactful beyond anecdotal evidence. This leaves questions looming over the academic integrity community, and there are no clear answers. Even in developing the second edition of the Academic Integrity Reader, the editors noted that "…there are few studies in either edition [of the Academic Integrity Reader] that examined interventions directed at students to change attitudes and behaviors" (Rogerson et al., 2022, p. 209).

A Review of Theories Underpinning Academic Integrity Research

There are many theories that help to explain why students commit academic misconduct or how to target those areas for student learning. In the most recent study by Perry et al. (2025), several theories were engaged to see the best model for academic misconduct. After running a structural equation model, comparing the different theories, and looking at the model with the constructs together and separate, the research team found that moral disengagement and moral neutralization had the strongest relationship to academic misconduct.

Moral development is commonly referred to in academic integrity literature. Born from the field of psychology, moral development is classed as a subsection of student development, but given its integral importance in academic integrity research, it can represent a whole subset of research into student decision-making.

Moral Development

Within moral literature, cheating was defined by Green (2006) as intentionally violating "…a fair and fairly enforced rule…with the intent to obtain an advantage over a party with whom [they are] in a cooperative, rule-bound relationship" (p. 57). However, intent is difficult to prove. Killen and Dahl (2021) would describe moral principles as those that care for others "welfare, rights, equality, fairness, and justice" (pp. 1210-1211). Instead of relying on intent and proving guilt, academic integrity should teach students how their decisions impact the well-being of those around them.

Moral development played an integral role in academic integrity policy and procedures. Students of higher education do develop morally during their time in college (Mayhew et al., 2016; King & Mayhew, 2002), and the teaching and learning and restorative justice approaches were designed to help foster that development for students. Moral development was born from

research by Lawrence Kohlberg, who listed one's moral development in stages out of a Piagetian tradition and relied heavily on sequential development (Kohlberg, 1973). Kohlberg's pre-conventional stages focused on the self and what happens during disobedience, whereas the conventional stage understood ethics in relation to interpersonal relationships and the orientation of the self in relation to society (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). The post-conventional stage was not reached by all people because it involves thinking and acting on ethics in relation to a higher moral plane than traditional rules, laws, and norms.

Kohlberg (1981) also wrote that teachers were purveyors of moral development to students, saying that "...like it or not, teachers are moral educators (or miseducators) as creators of the 'hidden curriculum' of the moral climate of the classroom" (p. 1). Power and Kohlberg (1987) believed that the hidden curriculum was the true curriculum for values, and it was embedded in every classroom at every stage of student education. While teachers did not directly teach students to engage in academic misconduct, they showed that acting with academic integrity was going against the grain. This led Power and Kohlberg (1987) to argue that institutions must teach moral education in intellectual curriculum and create a moral atmosphere.

James Rest, considered neo-Kohlbergian in his approach to moral development, used schema instead of stages. Rest argued that people used situational ethics to determine whether to use preconventional, conventional, or postconventional reasoning to determine their moral stance in the decision-making process (Rest et al., 1999). Each of the schema could be engaged for a variety of moral decisions. The shortcuts provided by each particular schema to decision-making were ingrained by repeated training through past decisions and their associated outcomes.

Perhaps more importantly, Rest developed the four components of moral decision-making: moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral action (Narvaez & Rest,

1995; Rest, 1986). To make the moral decision, people had to first recognize that the decision was a moral decision (moral sensitivity). Then, they needed the ability to review the choices and determine which was the moral choice (moral judgement) before ranking the moral choice as the best choice (moral motivation). Finally, they acted on the moral option (moral action). Using this four component model allowed institutions to see where students are at in their moral development, with Cooper and Schwartz (2007) showing that a student's age and level of education strongly influenced moral decision-making. Chassey (1999) compared students with conduct issues to those without and found that offenders—and especially repeat offenders—scored lower in categories related to moral judgement.

Moral Development in Higher Education

Higher education is a place where students can develop morally. Liddell and Cooper (2012) note the people often swap between 'moral development' and 'ethical development.' Though morality is sometimes tied to religion or other philosophical boundaries, either word choice could be used to describe campus initiatives that influence student moral growth. King and Mayhew (2002) found "dramatic gains" associated with moral judgement were linked to college attendance. This was tied to college-going adults "enroll[ing] in college at times in their lives when they are making important life transitions, many of which have moral implications" (King & Mayhew, 2002, p. 248). They also found that liberal arts education was more conducive to developing moral reasoning than other types of institutions. There were no noticeable differences between disciplines, though several studies were designed to compare business students to other students. For example, Flynn and Buchan (2016) found that business students who underwent ethics instruction had greater gains in moral reasoning. Finally, King and Mayhew (2002) found that there was evidence supporting interventions designed to increase

moral reasoning worked using the Defining Issues Test (DIT), a test designed to measure a student's moral development.

Another interesting link between moral development and curriculum was the way that active learning, reflection, and faculty student interaction increased DIT scores (Mayhew & King, 2008). There were clear links between positive relationships with faculty and moral development (Mayhew et al., 2016). Mayhew et al. (2016) also found that co-curricular engagement mattered, including "informal interactions with peers" (p. 352). That said, diversity education and exposure to diverse perspectives increased moral development, but only when negative interactions between diverse groups were not present as they could negatively impact moral development (Mayhew & Engberg, 2010). Although the number of times a student took the DIT impacted their DIT score, moral development could still be impacted by the classroom, engagement in research, and through previous behavior (Mayhew & Simonoff, 2015).

For instance, when investigating links between academic misconduct and moral development, Mayhew et al. (2009) found differences "(a) between high school cheating and subjective norms, (b) between high school cheating and perceived behavioral control, (c) between attitude toward behavior and intention, and (d) between intention and college cheating" (p. 457). Gains in student development and moral reasoning varied between students, but the links between moral development and a willingness to learn and grow were undeniable (Mayhew et al., 2010), especially when a student had shown the capacity to grow in the past (Corcoran & O'Flaherty, 2016).

Academic Integrity Interventions to Enhance Moral Decision-Making

Advancing student moral decision-making is a challenging endeavor, and there is limited knowledge on how moral decision-making can be built. Mayhew and King (2008) reviewed

curricular and pedagogical practices using Rest's (1984) four components to see their impact on moral reasoning development, and they found that active learning, reflection, and faculty-student interaction could increase moral reasoning, but negative interactions could decrease it.

Stephens and Wangaard (2016) investigated moral development in high school students based on an intervention designed to help students "achieve with integrity." In this study, the authors used Rest's (1984) four component model of moral decision-making to develop an integrity seminar. Unfortunately, Stephens and Wangaard did not review the impact of the program. Rather, they reviewed the fidelity of implementation. In 2023, Stephens worked with Bertram Gallant to find that a post-infraction intervention was effective: "participants not only reported greater attentiveness to moral issues after completing the Intervention, they also demonstrated greater awareness of the moral values related to academic misconduct" (Stephens & Bertram Gallant, 2023). More work is needed to understand what causes changes in student moral reasoning related to academic integrity.

A Theory to Underpin Academic Integrity Interventions

More research must be done on the underlying low-level theory (Kezar, 2006) and frameworks to explain the mechanisms behind successful academic integrity interventions. However, moral development frameworks provide a foundation for post-infraction interventions. One avenue that connected moral development with student conduct and student development is the Model of Transformational Change (MTC) (Neumeister, 2017).

This model helped students develop along Rest's (1986) Four Component Model, but only by causing prolonged moral dissonance; it began with individual consciousness raising before it progressed to intellectual stimulation though self-re-evaluation and ended with inspirational motivation by self-liberation (Neumeister, 2017). The first step of the MTC

assessed "students' readiness to change," which was used to determine which interventions were most appropriate. The next step helped students recognize their own behavior and drove them towards contemplation of that behavior moving forward. Neumeister explicitly linked MTC to restorative justice practices in step three, which was "ideally suited to increase the moral judgment and moral discernment of students in the contemplative stage. At this stage, the goal of interventions should be to provoke intellectual stimulation as a means of promoting self-re-evaluation" (Neumeister, 2017, p. 105). Then, Neumeister recommended developing moral efficacy—what Rest calls moral motivation—through mentoring and mastery experiences. All these interventions culminated in reaching moral action for students moving forward.

To adapt the MTC for academic integrity processes and programs, several changes were made. For example, stage one included a participant's willingness to accept responsibility for academic misconduct. That is because the first step in restorative justice and reintegrating into the community involves a willingness to admit fault and accept that a change needs to be made. Students who accept that their previous decision to engage in academic misconduct was wrong will also help them as they contemplate their actions. Some reintegrative practices, such as self-reflection, could be engaged earlier in the process. However, Neumeister did not adequately place reintegrative shaming in his model. The process of reintegrative shaming, which may happen during a restorative justice-based mediation, conference, or circle, is the key to helping students move from ranking the most ethical decision highly to acting on that moral principle. For a full look at the adaptation of MTC for an academic integrity intervention post-violation, see *Figure 2.1*. Rest did not believe it would be easy to measure the movement into action, writing that "[m]oving from the study of verbalizations…into the realm of real-life moral behavior, entails a quantum leap in complexity and juggling many variables and processes

simultaneously" (Rest, 1986, p. 20). As such, the impact of an academic integrity intervention on actual moral action may be difficult to quantify, and the programming should focus on moving the needle between moral judgment and moral motivation.

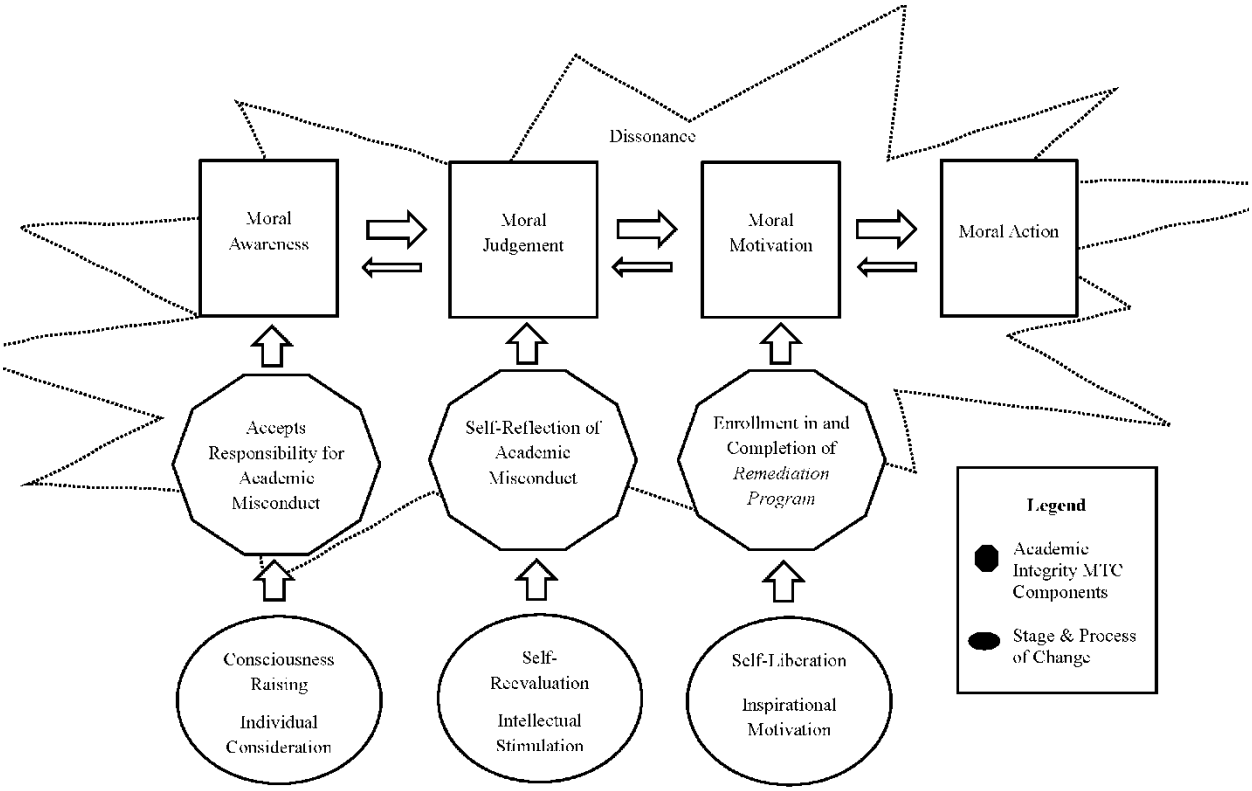

Figure 2.1 Adapted MTC Model with Academic Integrity Processes

Neumeister's (2017) Model of Transformational Change offers the best low-level theoretical framework for academic integrity interventions, especially those that take place after an academic integrity violation has taken place. Using moral dissonance to push students' moral development by building their self-efficacy and sense of belonging through gets at the heart of the goals of these programs.

Using Theory for a Post-Infraction Intervention

Academic integrity is a complex topic that can be approached in many ways. Because the nature of academic integrity lends itself to truth from multiple perspectives, studies should endeavor to understand that the individual is not the aggregate. Though trends may provide academic integrity practitioners with ideas to build a large-scale program, it is the individual experiences that provide nuanced adjustments to programs and processes that make them better and help students reach greater growth in moral decision-making. MTC is the best framework to understand the moral disruptors that cause moral dissonance and have the capacity to help students to move through the components of moral decision-making. MTC offers a framework to understand the mechanism through which a restorative justice-based academic integrity process and its associated *Remediation Program* would change student moral decision-making and its associated behaviors. Lacking measurable change, it is unlikely that any such program met its aspirational goal.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

The different facets of the original research questions led me to consider many different methodological approaches. Initial questions sought to address the differences between different student groups based on their engagement with the Academic Integrity Office (AIO) and how students across different groups perceived that experience:

RQ 1: What is the relationship between restorative justice-based academic integrity processes like the Remediation Program and student moral decision-making? (Quantitative)

RQ 2: What is the relationship between restorative justice-based academic integrity processes like the Remediation Program and student recidivism in academic misconduct? (Quantitative)

RQ 3: How do students who engage in academic misconduct regardless of program participation describe their experiences and perceptions of the academic integrity process? (Qualitative)

RQ 4: How do restorative justice practices shape student perceptions of academic integrity post-infraction? (Qualitative)

To answer both qualitative and quantitative questions above, I designed a mixed methods research study. Each method offered potentially crucial insight into academic integrity, and the most comprehensive understanding of the impact of a post-infraction intervention, mixed methods research offers a path to investigate the direct impact and by which mechanism that

impact takes place. While a multiple methods approach relies on both quantitative and qualitative data to answer the question, a mixed methods approach goes one step further because it integrates the data at many levels, assuming that both quantitative and qualitative data need to communicate with each other.

I designed my study to utilize both quantitative and qualitative methods, including inferential statistics, field observations, artifact or document analysis, and interviews. I felt that this approach allowed me to address each of my research questions and best evaluate the scope of the AIO process, with a primary focus on the *Remediation Program*, and its possible effect on students that engage with different levels of the process. While I collected my data with these intentions, the usable data both constrained and liberated my findings. I had to return to the drawing board with my quantitative approach, limiting the scope of my research questions. In addition, the qualitative data powerfully broadened the focus of the study from the *Remediation Program* to the entire AIO process, from the initial notice students received to the end of their interactions with the AIO. The resulting pivot changed many aspects of my approach and led to an adjusted set of research questions. The final research questions addressed were:

> *Q_1: What, if any, differences exist between students who experience the academic integrity process at SEU and those who do not?*
>
> *Q_2: How do students who have received an AIO record describe their experiences and perceptions of the academic integrity process?*
>
> *Q_3: How do restorative justice practices within an academic integrity process shape students' perception of academic integrity?*

Evaluating the Impact of Restorative Justice Practices in Academic Integrity Processes

According to Shannon-Baker (2015), mixed methods research "collect[s], analyz[es], and report[s] data in ways that promotes dialogue, particularly between the quantitative and qualitative data sets" (p. 329). I had initially prepared for a dialectic approach, believing it to be the best way to evaluate post-infraction academic integrity interventions by bringing together quantitative and qualitative in constant, respectful dialogue to increase understanding (Biesta, 2010; Shannon-Baker, 2015; Greene & Hall, 2010). However, low survey response rates forced me to alter the way in which I brought together the qualitative and quantitative data. Pragmatism—which "positions philosophical traditions and multiple perspectives in service of the inquiry problem at hand" (Greene & Hall, 2010)—was utilized to understand the way a restorative justice-based AIO process and *Remediation Program* was related to student moral decision-making and their view of academic integrity after having engaged with its associated policy and processes.

Program Evaluation as a Case Study

Program evaluation is open to using a variety of methods to evaluate a specific intervention (Rossi et al., 2019), with possible focus on addressing the need for a program, the program's design or implementation, or its outcome. Often, such evaluation reviewed a program's implementation in multiple locations; however, an intrinsic case study allows a comprehensive view of the AIO process, which academic integrity practitioners "need to learn about that particular case" to see if it should be continued or adapted (Stake, 1995, p. 3). To understand "…the complex interrelationships among all that exists" (Stake, 1995, p. 37) and a program's effectiveness, they could then justify continued funding from the institution. Flyvbjerg (2006) argued that case study research is needed because the context may vary to such a degree

as to rule out epistemic knowledge. Such claims of context variance have plagued studies related to restorative justice-based program evaluations—even those using randomized controlled trials considered the gold standard of research (Wilcox et al., 2005). A case study approached allowed me to provide a nuanced understanding of the data, and while it did not lead to predictive theory, it provided data on intervention's impact (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Although some researchers find it impossible to reconcile philosophical differences between case study methodologists who hold conflicting ontological and epistemological assumptions, I used Yin's positivist/post-positivist paradigmatic approach to case study research in tandem with Merriam's constructivist orientation in this research (Yazan, 2015). With Merriam's approach, the goal was to explain the experiences of the subjects, while Yin's pursuit of "how" and "why" is considered instrumental to program evaluation (Yazan, 2015, p 138). Both Merriam and Yin bound cases around a specific phenomenon, which represented both sides of inquiry. I adapted this lens for an academic integrity intervention because I do not believe quantitative analysis is limited to a positivist/post positivist orientation. Wilcox and colleagues (2005) specifically recommend mixed methods or multiple methods for doing restorative justice work due to problems with validity, including: a lack of blinding and attention to details regarding the processes and mechanisms of the restorative justice program; no clear treatment uniformity; and the use of recidivism as a proxy for re-offending rather than reoffending being the measurable outcome. To address these issues, I found that incorporating qualitative research into the study was critical, and bounding the study to a single program provided the best map forward.

Mixed Methodology: When a Single Methodology is Not Enough

Mixing methods was an ambitious goal that would have generated gargantuan amounts of data collected and analyzed. However, mixed methods provided "broader, deeper, and more comprehensive social understanding by using methods that tap into different facets or dimensions of the same complex phenomenon" (Greene, 2007, p. 101). Originally, I hoped to fit together the pieces of a puzzle to see the larger picture of the development of student moral decision-making based on the student interactions with the AIO's *Remediation Program*, and I designed this study on academic integrity interventions to use mixed methods complementarity. This approach "…measure[d] different facets of the same complex phenomenon…even though an overlapping or interlocking pattern is the one intended" (Greene, 2007, p. 101). I felt that moral development was sufficiently complex that a complementarity approach that puts the quantitative data in dialogue with the qualitative data allowed for the most thorough approach to address the research questions I had regarding the academic integrity intervention and its relationship to student behavior based on their perceptions of the experience. Unfortunately, this approach had to be readjusted after the quantitative data was collected and yielded too few responses across the different groups of students of interest. Instead, triangulation overtook the primary purpose of mixing methods in this study. Here, triangulation was expanded to explain how "different methods are used to measure the *same phenomenon*" (Greene, 2007, p. 100).

I focused on using a parallel convergent design, where both quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017), though the data collection overlapped, the data integration primarily took place during data analysis occurred after data collection concluded. Merging data during collection was the most practical approach to combine, compare, and contrast the quantitative and qualitative data.

Mixed Methods in Educational Research

I argue that a mixed methods design provided the approach to address all of my original research questions; thus, it is important to note that evaluating restorative justice based-programs using mixed methods is not new to education. Dedinsky (2012) reviewed restorative justice programs at urban high schools in their dissertation to understand the impacts compared to other systems. Using "transformative mixed methods" via participatory action research Garnett et al. (2019) evaluated critical consciousness in students, and Kervick et al. (2020) published a mixed methods case study on how restorative justice practices in elementary students can reduce the number of students that are excluded from their institutions. Most of the existing mixed methods studies that look at restorative justice practices focus on behavioral conduct, not on academic conduct, and are limited to K-12 organizations.

Using mixed methods research is also quite prevalent in evaluation studies across higher education. Chen et al. (2017) reviewed the effectiveness of a quality improvement course for faculty teaching online courses, and Cole et al. (2019) used a longitudinal design to review the impact of a college bridge program. The effect of note-taking at the student level was investigated by Igo et al. (2008), while von Konsky et al. (2014) used mixed methods to understand how academic staff at an Australian university engage students in teaching and learning design. However, none of these studies look at the application of restorative justice in academic misconduct programs at tertiary institutions.

Mixed methods research entailed more than running a study using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Data was integrated and analyzed together. Using previous education and academic integrity studies to find effective examples of mixed methods research is productive

for building a study to measure the impact of moral development in an academic integrity processes and post-infraction interventions.

Quantitative

I planned to use quantitative data to assess my overarching hypothesis: restorative justice-based academic integrity processes and programs impact student moral decision-making. I originally hoped to discover a causal relationship and address my first two research questions:

> *RQ 1: What is the relationship between restorative justice-based academic integrity processes like the Remediation Program and student moral decision-making?*
>
> *RQ 2: What is the relationship between restorative justice-based academic integrity processes like the Remediation Program and student recidivism in academic misconduct?*

I relied on people being regular and predictable, to investigate for commonalities across the groups (Fischer et al., 2023). While people differently experience the same event, quantitative data would have allowed me to aggregate experiences and see changes to the group at large. As such, it was just as imperative as qualitative data to evaluate the impact of a post-infraction academic integrity intervention. A quasi-experimental design with responses to student surveys using propensity matching was initially attempted.

Data Collection and Analysis

Use of propensity score methods (weighting and matching) were designed into the study to approximate longer-term changes between students who do and do not complete the *Remediation Program*. Student records available from the AIO's case management system included student demographic information to ensure accuracy in the survey, integrity violation type and sanction, and *Remediation Program* enrollment and completion. This was vital to provide a comparison group from the treated group, both in students who do not complete the

intervention and students who have never violated the policy (Cunningham, 2021). Regardless, employing this strategy offered another dimension to this comprehensive program evaluation.

The survey found in *Appendix C* was sent to enrolled students at Southeastern University (SEU) that matriculated between August 2022 and February 2025. Because the *Remediation Program* was not required for students found in violation of the academic honesty policy, I hoped to control for self-selection between the students who choose to do the *Remediation Program* and those who do not. In addition, there could be differences between students accused and found in violation of the policy and those who had not interacted with the Academic Integrity Office. These different groups needed to be compared as a part of my strategy to use propensity methods.

The survey used several existing scales related to ethical or moral status and academic integrity. The primary scale was the validated instrument found in the updated McCabe-ICAI Academic Misconduct Instrument (MIAMI) survey (Rettinger et al., 2024). The dependent variable for the model was the cheating behavior scale from the MIAMI. The question asked students how often they engaged in certain academic misconduct behaviors such as "Working together on an assignment with other students when the instructor asked for individual work," or "Paraphrasing or copying a few sentences or more from any source (such as a journal article, website, or another student's paper) without citing it in a paper or assignment you submitted." I adapted the MIAMI to compare target groups with and without an academic misconduct record by asking if they had an academic integrity violation on file with the Academic Integrity Office. I then sorted frequency of cheating behavior by inquiring how often students engaged in academic misconduct behaviors since they received their academic integrity violation for those students that received an academic misconduct record or looking at misconduct behaviors within

the last year for those students with no academic misconduct record. This question served as a survey fidelity check because student responses were checked against academic misconduct records, as students agreed to in their survey consent.

The MIAMI was used both to catalogue the misconduct behaviors in which students self-reported and provided scales related to moral judgement and moral disengagement as an additional construct related to academic misconduct (Rettinger et al., 2024). Rettinger and colleagues found that students that found academic misconduct to be morally wrong were less likely to self-report academic misconduct behaviors and students that scored higher on moral disengagement were more likely to self-report academic misconduct. Similarly, Perry et al. (2025) found that not only are the moral scales strongly related to academic misconduct, but in comparing different models to predict academic misconduct, they found that the moral scales were the strongest indicator of student self-reported engagement in academic misconduct.

A second source of for the survey to account for student moral decision making involved questions come from the Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ) (Forsyth, 1980; O'Boyle & Forsyth, 2021). Revised in 2021, the EPQ "measures variations in sensitivity to harm (idealism) and to moral standards (relativism)" (O'Boyle & Forsyth, 2021, p. 1), the positions defined on Forsyth's continua, dividing people into "Exceptionists" with low idealism and low relativism, "Subjectivists" with low idealism and high relativism, "Absolutists" with high idealism and low relativism, and "Situationists" with high idealism and high relativism. The EPQ scores may relate to the moral judgement and moral disengagement scales from the MIAMI, with moral judgement related to idealism and moral disengagement related to relativism.

The most prevalent measure of moral development in college students is the Defining Issues Test (DIT) (Mayhew et al., 2016; Mayhew et al., 2010, 2012). The DIT was designed to

activate moral schema in the decision-making process (Gungordu et al., 2023). However, the DIT itself requires a significant amount of time for the participant, with multiple moral dilemmas, each requiring a unique set of questions. To ease the burden on participants, one dilemma inspired by the DIT's Heinz Drug Scenario was developed and input into the survey.

As previously stated, the survey was electronically conducted, using email as the medium for communication. Even though an altruistic incentive was offered to participants, the response rate severely limited the conclusions that could be drawn from the sample. The survey was sent to all undergraduate students who matriculated after the *Remediation Program*'s implementation, which was the summer 2022 semester, and remained enrolled at SEU for the spring 2025 semester (N= 27,735). In total, 1,109 students responded (4% response rate), but after cleaning the data for "fairly honest" responses (Zimmerman & Langer, 1995) and responses that provided no response to the dependent variable, the response rate dropped to 1% (N=384). Of the responses that remained eligible for the study, only nine respondents had an academic misconduct record, with two students having at least some engagement in the *Remediation Program* and two completing the program.

The low response rate radically altered the quantitative analysis that could be completed. Instead of engaging in quasi-experimental data analysis, I had to pivot to smaller comparisons between students with and without a violation. Stone and Tang (2013) looked at the use of "small" samples with propensity methods, and they found that there was far less power in their sample of 30 than the sample of 60. Given that there were only nine respondents who had engaged with the AIO, and only 6 had actually received an AIO record, there was not enough power to complete propensity analysis. So, I recorded descriptive statistics before turning to t-tests of the scales related to moral schema, positions, judgement, and disengagement between

students with and with an academic misconduct record. I had to adjust my research question to see

> *Q_1: What, if any, differences exist between students who experience the academic integrity process at SEU and those who do not?*

To do this, I relied on simple t-tests with unequal variance. I also needed to recognize that because the sample size between the groups was so limited, the conclusions I could draw from the results were equallay restrained. Regardless, for each scale on my survey, I conducted hypothesis testing to see if students that had an AIO record were equal to students without and AIO record.

Though the initially planned propensity methods could offer a more comprehensive look at the relationships between academic misconduct, moral perceptions, and the *Remediation Program*, causality would have remained unconfirmed. As such, the use of t-tests to find whether there were differences between students with and without academic misconduct records may be considered the first step in learning about the impact of restorative justice-based practices on student moral development in academic integrity processes.

The sample itself was also flawed. It was uncharacteristically heavy on male respondents (70.45%), given that SEU's student population is skewed towards women. In addition, the percentage of respondents that were considered first year students (Freshman) is artificially lowered by SEU's tracking system, which attributes years by credit hours rather than matriculation. Students that completed AP coursework or were enrolled in dual enrollment program in high school would enter SEU listed as a sophomore or junior. *Table 3.3* provides a breakdown on the survey participants.

Table 3.1. Survey Participant Demographics

Characteristics

Male	70.45%
Asian	14.4%
Black	6.28%
Hispanic	7.07%
Multiracial	5.76%
White	67.02%
Veterans	0.79%
Athletes	0.26%
International Students	3.4%
Freshman	4.97%
Sophomores	31.68%
Juniors	36.91%
Seniors	26.44%
Arts	3.4%
Business	19.37%
Education	6.28%
Family & Consumer Sciences	4.19%
Journalism	4.45%
STEM	37.7%
Social Sciences / Humanities	22.25%

Qualitative Methods

I used qualitative methods to focus on process, understanding, and meaning, including using complex reasoning that was multifaceted and iterative to contextualize a phenomenon within my final two research questions.

RQ 3: How do students who engage in academic misconduct regardless of program participation describe their experiences and perceptions of the academic integrity process?

RQ 4: How do restorative justice practices shape student perceptions of academic integrity post-infraction?

Grounded in ethical approaches to research, I aimed to understand the reality experienced by the participants. “The research process [was] an iterative one, moving from collection of data analysis and back until the description is comprehensive” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 143). I utilized several applicable data collection methods in this mixed methods study of an academic integrity

intervention. Data collection was case specific because programs between institutions vary widely.

The data collection caused me to reconsider my original research questions. During interviews and observations, students were explicitly discussing aspects of the AIO process that I had not focused on originally. Further, as I triangulated these responses with student artifacts, I began to be convinced that I needed to expand my focus beyond the *Remediation Program* and into other facets of student interaction with the AIO. As such, I broadened my qualitatively focused research questions:

Q_2: How do students who have received an AIO record describe their experiences and perceptions of the academic integrity process?

Q_3: How do restorative justice practices within an academic integrity process shape students' perception of academic integrity?

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected after access to the Academic Integrity Office (AIO) was granted at Southeastern University (SEU). The target population included students who acknowledged a violation of the academic integrity policy during a meeting with their instructor and a mediator from the office. The list of possible student participants was prepared using the case management system, which tracks student demographic information, type of violation, level of process, and participation in the *Remediation Program*. For the students who participated in the *Remediation Program*, access to both student artifacts and student responses were critical and were located on the institution's learning management system (LMS) and Qualtrics. Students who completed the intervention were required to answer a pre- and post-program questionnaire through Qualtrics. In addition, the LMS hosts a course for students to submit their reflection essay, responses to open-

ended questions in an online academic integrity module, and Personal Learning Objectives (PLOs). Finally, the case management system provided details related to the start of the program, the date and time of steps completed, and decisions made by students, such as copies of their chosen Personal Learning Objectives and how those objectives were measured or submitted as an assignment on the learning management system.

Students provided access to this information as a part of their consent to be interviewed and/or observed. Every student interviewed or observed provided consent to access their full academic integrity record. This provided a wealth of written work to analyze, bringing the total number of students whose documents were analyzed to 30 and leading to a total of 89 documents. Data were de-identified prior to uploading to qualitative software and tied to participant pseudonyms; this was stored in a file on a secure external hard drive.

Bowen (2009) defined document analysis as "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents" (p. 27). The documents related to this study included student responses to open-ended questionnaires, self-reflection assignments and learning objectives, and responses to an online academic integrity module. Documents were not limited to written work; instead, they were explored within their situational context (Prior, 2008). Documents were managed using qualitative analysis software Dedoose. The breadth of the documents necessitated the use of open coding for first-cycle coding to develop initial patterns from the different documents before moving to axial coding to look at the intersections in themes from the open code (Saldaña, 2021). First-cycle coding was done conceptually, with second-cycle coding focused on pattern coding to find emerging themes.

In addition to student-created artifacts and responses, observations of Restorative Justice Conferences (RJCs) between program administrators and students offered an opportunity to

"examine complex social settings" as the events unfold (Anleu et al., 2016, p. 375). As another source of data, observations offered greater insight into a post-infraction academic integrity intervention in its natural setting. Spradley (1980) discussed the participation of the observers throughout the observations, with warnings that a participant observer must take care and use additional introspection within the observation process.

As an observer, I landed between a passive participant and a moderate participant. While I did not "participate or interact with other people to any great extent," there needed to be a balance for the researcher in the room to not appear as an interloper, especially when discussing sensitive topics (Spradley, 1980, p. 59). There was some expansion of my participation in the study outside of the observed encounters. With my experience in academic integrity, I provided information to AIO staff upon request. No recording took place during the observations of the RJCs. This reduced my impact in the space because the students did not need to worry about their voices leaving the conference room (Rutakumwa et al., 2020). Though Rutakumwa et al. (2020) discussed the lack of a need for a recorder in interviews, the principles can be transferred to observing the RJCs: detailed fieldnotes and a memo were created after each conference to ensure that no significant details are lost. The protocol for observations can be found in *Appendix A*, which provided an outline for observing in the moment, which enabled better and more accurate field notes for evaluation. In addition, separate notes were taken in a spiral notebook which were later transcribed for analysis.

A total of 6 observations were completed, with 26 participants (including peer educators, faculty representatives, a facilitator, and students offenders), some of whom participated in multiple RJCs. Each RJC consisted of one facilitator, one faculty representative, one peer educator, and two to four student offenders. The facilitator was present at all six RJCs, and Dr.

Keyes and Shelly were present as the faculty representative and peer educator for multiple RJCs. Information on participants can be found in *Table 3.1.* Similar to data saturation in focus groups, six RJCs were observed to reach data saturation for theme analysis (Wutich et al., 2024). Observations provided a different type of qualitative data that is central to qualitative research (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). In addition to providing triangulation to ensure finding accuracy, observation helped to "develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible…" (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, p. 110). Observational research was well established in judicial work (Anleu et al., 2016; Morrison et al., 2021), small group structures (Jones et al., 2021), and in education (Beech, 2022; Lee & Mccabe, 2021). Observations of the academic integrity RJCs resulted in field notes and detailed memos after each observation. Field notes were written in a systematic way, including descriptive accounts of what took place from the researcher's perspective as the RJC progressed. Emerson (1995) recommended writing down both initial impressions and significant occurrences—including what makes them significant and routine over time. Developing a rubric for the observation was useful in ensuring the field notes reflect the meetings accurately (*Appendix A*). In addition to the rubric, a notebook for additional notes was available during each observation for a detailed account from my perspective of the RJC observed.

Table 3.2 Observation Participant Information

Alias	Gender	Race	Age	Major	Violation Type	Role
Dr. Keyes*	M	White	30+	STEM	-	FR
Jazz	F	White	21	Humanities	-	PE
Rich	M	White	22	Social Science	Unauthorized Assistance	SO
Meg	F	Asian	20	Business	Lying / Tampering	SO
Tara	F	White	20	STEM	Unauthorized Assistance	SO
Dr. Blue	M	White	30+	Business	-	FR
Mel	F	White	22	Art	-	PE
Danny	M	White	28	Humanities	Unauthorized Assistance	SO
Akhil	M	Asian	20	Business	Lying / Tampering & Unauthorized Assistance**	SO

Ayla	F	Black	23	STEM	Unauthorized Assistance	SO
Shelly*	F	Asian	22	Social Science	-	PE
Nell	F	White	20	Social Science	Plagiarism / Unauthorized Assistance	SO
Dr. Velzer	F	White	30+	Technology	-	FR
Leo	M	Asian	21	STEM	-	PE
Sami	F	Multiracial	18	STEM	Unauthorized Assistance	SO
Everett	M	White	20	Business	Unauthorized Assistance	SO
Kelsey	F	White	23	Business	Unauthorized Assistance	SO
Dr. Nunly	M	White	30+	Social Science	-	FR
Eric	M	Black	20	Technology	Lying / Tampering	SO
Kira	F	White	20	Social Science	Unauthorized Assistance	SO
Sara	F	White	22	Social Science	Unauthorized Assistance	SO
Ren	F	White	18	Business	Unauthorized Assistance	SO
Fae	F	White	19	STEM	Plagiarism	SO
Omar	M	Asian	18	Business	Unauthorized Assistance	SO
Samson	M	Asian	19	STEM	Unauthorized Assistance	SO
Juan*	F	Asian	29	PhD Education	-	F

* Indicates participation in more than one RJC
** Indicates more than one violation
FR: Faculty Representative, PE: Peer Educator, SO: Student Offender: F: Facilitator

Each observation resulted in a separate memo that reflected the observations and any potential participation. Memoing enabled clarity on the topic in addition to an outlet to articulate "assumptions and subjective perspectives" (Birks et al., 2008, p. 69). All rubric notes, additional notes, and memos were digitized as part of the data analysis and integration process, and all participants in the observations were given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

Observations of the academic integrity RJCs resulted in field notes and detailed memos after each observation. Field notes were written in a systematic way, including descriptive accounts of what took place from the researcher's perspective as the RJC progressed. Emerson (1995) recommended writing down both initial impressions and significant occurrences—including what makes them significant and routine over time. Developing a rubric for the observation was useful in ensuring the field notes reflect the meetings accurately (*Appendix A*). In addition to the rubric, a notebook for additional notes was available during each observation

for a detailed account from my perspective of the RJC observed. Each observation resulted in a separate memo that reflected the observations and any potential participation. Memoing enabled clarity on the topic in addition to an outlet to articulate "assumptions and subjective perspectives" (Birks et al., 2008, p. 69). All rubric notes, additional notes, and memos were digitized as part of the data analysis and integration process, and all participants in the observations were given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

Lareau (2003) recommend "reading, rereading, and reading again" the field notes and memos (p. 359) to analyze the data from observations, and this was done using the same qualitative software and two-cycle coding as the document analysis. As Saldaña pointed out, "Rarely will anyone get coding right the first time…recoding can occur with a more attuned perspective using first sycle methods again, while second cycle methods describe those processes that might be employed during the second (and third and possibly fourth, etc.) review of data" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 15). Polkinghorne (2005) viewed observations as a useful supplement to interviews. Spradley (1980), however, advocated for interviews that used the data from the observations to inform researcher questions. As a part of the data integration and parallel convergent design, there was no way for the observations to not influence interviews with students and vice versa.

In-depth interviewing dove deeply into the experiences of the students with an academic misconduct record. The interviews were semi-structured and open to divergence. The flexibility to pivot the questions and to interrogate different aspects of the student experience were paramount, and students experienced their own reflexivity and changing minds during the interviews due to the nature of talking through their issues (Perera, 2020). Initial planning anticipated more than 30 student interviews, including students who never attempted, attempted

but failed to complete, and completed the *Remediation Program*. Students were sampled from a list of students that received an academic honesty violation from the date that the *Remediation Program* was available through the spring 2025 semester using the case management system. A $10 gift card incentive was initially offered to attract the anticipated interview participants, but this incentive was insufficient to encourage participation in the interview process. To increase the pool of participants, the incentive was increased to $25, yielding 14 interviews: 7 students never attempted the *Remediation Program*, 4 failed to complete the *Remediation Program*, and 3 completed the *Remediation Program*. Information on participants is found in *Table 3.2*. Saturation was not based on a category of participation or completion of the *Remediation Program*. Instead, interview data saturation was based on the student experience with the academic integrity process (Guest et al., 2006). The updated goal, taking saturation into account, was expected (Guest et al., 2006; Wutich et al., 2024).

All interviews were held using Zoom to promote rapport building while also offering convenience to interview participants (Khan & MacEachen, 2022; Oliffe et al., 2021; Ullman, 2024). Further, Zoom ensured that students were comfortable with a conversation around their prior academic misconduct in a space where they felt secure. Generally, participants have described positive experiences interviewing on Zoom, despite any potential technical difficulties (Archibald et al., 2019). Students were not required to have their cameras on, encouraging them to be honest because they did not have to face themselves when answering difficult questions (Oliffe et al., 2021). Another benefit to Zoom was the ability to record and draft a transcription of the data (Khan & MacEachen, 2022). The interview protocol can be found in *Appendix B*.

Table 3.3 Interview Participant Information

Alias	Gender	Race	Age	Major	Violation Type	Remediation
Jenna	F	White	21	Social Science	Unauthorized Assistance	Never
Nihar	M	Asian	21	STEM	Plagiarism	Attempted

Graham	M	White	23	Business	Plagiarism & Unauthorized Assistance**	Completed
Bobby	M	Black	19	Social Science	Unauthorized Assistance	Never
Bailey	F	White	22	Business	Unauthorized Assistance	Attempted
V	M	Asian	21	STEM	Unauthorized Assistance	Never
Opal	F	Asian	21	STEM	Plagiarism	Attempted
Vera	F	White	20	STEM	Unauthorized Assistance	Never
Leona	F	Black	22	STEM	Plagiarism	Never
Palmer	F	Asian	19	STEM	Plagiarism	Completed
Zora	F	Asian	22	STEM	Unauthorized Assistance & Plagiarism**	Attempted
Ari	M	Asian	30+	STEM*	Plagiarism & Unauthorized Assistance	Never
Avery	F	White	19	Business	Unauthorized Assistance	Completed
Iris	F	White	30+	STEM*	Plagiarism & Unauthorized Assistance	Never

* Indicates an advanced degree seeking student (e.g., PhD, DVM, etc.)
** Indicates student had more than one violation

Interviews were analyzed, and like observations, memoing was critical after each interview. Memoing during the coding process was instrumental in extracting meaning from the data (Birks et al., 2008).Considering the interviews were semi-structured to allow flexibility in each discussion, the individuality of each interview participant and the context of their experience was shared rather than forced by a rigid interview protocol (Seidman, 2012). It also provided the opportunity to delve into potentially emotional topics with participants; I worked to develop rapport by displaying to students an ethic of care, and follow up communication to ensured that their views were presented fairly and accurately (Leahy, 2022). Though students sometimes had shifting perceptions, interview data was interpreted carefully to include jointly generated meaning that encompassed the frame of orientation from the interviewee's narrative (Philipps & Mrowczynski, 2021).

Interview transcripts were uploaded to the qualitative research software, though the analysis followed a different structure than observations and document analysis. Verbal

Exchange Coding of the interviews was an integral part of the overall analysis of the interviews. I began by identifying the five forms of verbal exchange (Saldaña, 2018, 2021). This coding included examining and reflecting on the transcripts, listening to the recording multiple times, and using memoing to make meaning of the conversation as it moved from ritual to dialogue (Saldaña, 2016).

The interviews went through a cyclical process of communication with Goodall's views of verbal exchange (Saldaña, 2016). I built rapport with questions designed to elicit phatic communication and ordinary conversation, such as asking after the student's length of time at the institution, information about their major choice, and their plans after graduation. The ordinary conversation moved towards skilled communication as students began to discuss their experiences; they were navigating their image of themselves with their past behavior. Students relied heavily on personal narratives, for all types of responses, with only the students that were truly transformed by their experiences with SEU's integrity processes reaching the stage of dialogue.

Validity/Trustworthiness

As a former academic integrity practitioner, reflexivity within this research was vital. I am actively engaged in academic integrity research. This made it challenging to maintain boundaries during some qualitative data collection. For example, the RJC facilitator asked for advice outside of one RJC and implemented that advice in future conferences. Further, a values-orientation towards an educational and restorative-justice based approach challenged notions of objectivity. However, it is because of the value system that I was able to deeply engage with the program and understand whether it is impacting students. If the program failed to engage student moral development, it needed to be redesigned; thus, the desire for the most instructive and

impactful program outweighed any personal desire to see the program in its current form as successful.

Triangulation throughout the data collection and analysis assisted in ensuring the trustworthiness of the study. In addition, thick description of the student experiences showed the prolonged engagement and holistic approach to the study (Ponterotto, 2006). Though the present study was not an ethnographic study, Ponterotto's five essential components of thick description applied: describing and interpreting the social realities of an interaction, capturing the web of interactions among participants, assigning motivations to the actions, building the world of the experience in a way for readers to believe they could have experienced the events, and leading to a "thick" meaning. Document analysis assisted in triangulating the data – specifically when comparing student artifacts to the RJC observations and student interviews (Bowen, 2009). Using interviews, observations, and document analysis together provided a rich dataset.

As this was a case study, it was difficult to generalize an effect. However, the findings may be generalized to students within the institution studied. Used with previous literature, it is transferable to institutions with a similar composition and intervention. Dependability was achieved because the findings are consistent and could be repeated if the study were done by another researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To enhance this study's dependability, an audit trail that "describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" was developed (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 252). Further, the code used in the statistical analysis can be made available by request, allowing any researcher to replicate the findings.

Limitations

When looking at an evaluation of an academic integrity intervention, it was important to note that generalizations are limited; however, as Stake (1995) noted, this may limit any grand generalizations, but that was not the goal of this case study research. In understanding the mechanisms that help or hinder an academic integrity intervention post-infraction, other institutions may implement similar programs within their own institutional contexts and a similar strategy for evaluating their own programs.

Another challenge of such a study was the large amount of data analyzed and interpreted. The volume of data made synthesizing the data in a way that was useful for consumption by a diverse group of stakeholders a challenge (Simons, 2009). There are multiple target audiences for research on academic integrity interventions: senior administration for the institution, academic integrity practitioners, researchers, and faculty; as such, the results needed to be clear and engaging for all readers. I had planned to use mixed methods research to address the research questions through the data's integration for analysis. Setting up the study with a mixed methods approach would have allowed for a clearer picture of the effect of the *Remediation Program* than either qualitative or quantitative methods alone. Though both qualitative and quantitative methods were still used, and the data was integrated at the analysis phase, the study is limited by the lack of responses from students with an AIO record. This pivot limits the scope of the study to fully evaluate the AIO process and *Remediation Program*.

As previously stated, the largest hurdle came from data collection. Interviewees were initially offered a $10 gift card incentive, but this was not substantial enough to garner participants to saturation, only yielding two participants. After sending multiple emails, I finally raised the incentive to a $25 gift card and provided the previous interview participants with an

additional gift card to make up the difference, before I was able to yield enough participants for saturation. The observations, on the other hand, were easy to attend and each observation yielded substantial data. Finally, the survey was a surprise. After initially culling the response list for honest responses, I thought I had over 800 participants. However, after further cleaning the data, the number of students that did not answer questions related to cheating behaviors made their responses less useful. Furthermore, the key comparison between groups that was needed to integrate the qualitative and quantitative data more substantially could not be interrogated as desired with so few respondents having an academic misconduct record. Were I to do the survey again, I would consider drawing a stratified random sample of the student population by groups of interest. I would also offer a more substantial personal incentive, rather than relying on altruism to drive survey responses.

Conclusion

In light of the limitations imposed by the sample collected quantitatively, I was still able to use the data to inform my study. Even with the limited sample, we can see that there are some differences between students with an AIO record and those without an AIO record. This informs the qualitative data that I successfully collected through student interviews, RJC observations, and document analysis, allowing for a more thorough triangulation of the data and a more thoughtful approach to addressing the final research questions:

> *Q_1: What, if any, differences exist between students who experience the academic integrity process at SEU and those who do not?*
>
> *Q_2: How do students who have received an AIO record describe their experiences and perceptions of the academic integrity process?*

Q_3: How do restorative justice practices within an academic integrity process shape students' perception of academic integrity?

CHAPTER 4

THE CASE

Southeastern University (SEU) is a research intensive, doctoral granting institution located in the southeast region of the United States. Like many other research-intensive universities, it enrolls tens of thousands of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students annually, with a student body primarily driven by undergraduate students. The primary campus is located in a small to midsize city, and it is outside of the state capital.

SEU is situated within the state-wide educational system and is committed to promoting excellence in teaching and learning, growing research, innovation, and entrepreneurship, and strengthening partnerships thought the state, country, and globe in its current strategic plan. The institution's motto addresses all three purposes of higher education: teaching, learning, and service. The motto also reflects the institution's stance towards addressing student conduct issues through alternative dispute resolution models that are based on restorative justice practices.

Academic Integrity and Southeastern University

Nearly all students are held to the standards set forth in the institution's academic integrity policy, with only one program retaining a separate academic integrity policy and process. Within the academic integrity policy, students are expected to abide by the honor code to maintain academic integrity and not allow peer dishonesty; this was adopted by the student government association and approved by faculty governance (*SE Integrity Policy*, 2022). *SE Integrity Policy* (2022) is the written as the only institutionally acceptable avenue for instructors to handle suspected academic misconduct, though some instructors fail to engage in the policy

when they find suspected academic misconduct. The policy aims to ensure student academic integrity as a vital aspect of the organizational culture. The procedures outlined in *SE Integrity Policy* were created to protect students' rights to due process while also fairly addressing academic misconduct. The policy states three explicit goals: ensuring a climate of academic integrity, maintaining institutional reputation, and to fairly adjudicate cases.

The academic integrity policy provides definitions of prohibited and required behavior. For example, it prohibits a student from attempting, engaging in, or completing academic work that is dishonest, regardless of intent. Further, the policy breaks down academic dishonesty into categories: plagiarism, unauthorized assistance, lying and tampering, and theft. Students are bound to *SE Integrity Policy* by virtue of enrolling at SEU. If an instructor believes a student has engaged in academic misconduct, they have 15 days to report the violation to the Academic Integrity Office (AIO).

Resolving Academic Misconduct

When an instructor suspects a student has been academically dishonest, they submit an online report to the AIO. Within the reporting form, they can attach any supporting documentation to the required short summary of what they believe has happened. Then, the AIO sends the student an email with the summary of the allegation and any attached documentation. The email is used to schedule a meeting between the student and the instructor at the AIO with a mediator. This first step, the *Mediation*, is scheduled with a mediator to help the student and instructor engage in a productive, fair, and educational conversation about the student's academic work and alleged academic misconduct (*SE Integrity Policy*). The mediator begins the meeting by explaining the process and possible outcomes of the meeting to the student and instructor; then, they allow the instructor and student to explain their perspective about what

occurred. If, during that meeting, the parties agree that academic misconduct took place, the mediator helps create an agreement that acknowledges the academic misconduct and outlines an appropriate sanction. The sanctions can vary widely to account for the possible levels of violation egregiousness and student extenuating circumstances. In fact, the policy's only stipulations to sanctions assigned during the *Mediation* are that it is fair and educational, definitions which vary widely by course, program, instructor, and student. Students have a limited period of time after the *Mediation* to decide whether to keep the agreement drawn up in the meeting. This feature is designed to address possible power dynamics, allowing students to change their minds in the event they felt pressured to agree to a proposal that was not in their interests. The *Mediation* is the first restorative justice-based practice within the AIO operating procedures. It closely resembles Zehr's (1990) Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP), which brings the victim (instructor) together with the offender (student) to work out an agreement. Undergraduate students that acknowledge a violation during the *Mediation* are eligible to have their record restricted if they choose to complete the *Remediation Program*.

Sometimes, the student and the instructor are unable to come to an agreement in the *Mediation*. When this occurs, the case is referred to a *Discussion with an Integrity Panel*. This level of process is much more formal and more closely resembles a court-room procedure. A staff member from AIO reads a statement into an audio recording before allowing the instructor to explain why they reported the alleged misconduct, including walking the panelists through any provided documentation. Then, the student may respond to the allegation, including providing and explaining any documentation to the panel. During this, the panelists can ask the instructor and student questions. Similarly, the instructor and the student can question each other. It is supposed to be a continuation of the dialogue that started during the *Mediation*, with the outcome

determined by a panel of instructors and students. The panelists are three students and two instructors, with stipulations made for specific proportions of students and faculty being graduate/professional students when a graduate/professional student is the accused student in the *Discussion with an Integrity Panel*. The sanctions outlined in the *Discussion with an Integrity Panel* are more severe, including a required failure of the assignment and an additional sanction (e.g., course failure, transcript notation, or separation from the institution). Students are able to appeal any decision from *Discussion with an Integrity Panel*.

The final process described in *SE Integrity Policy* applies to students that have more than one violation of the academic integrity policy: the *Review of Multiple Offenses (RMO).* The board that oversees *RMO* rotates, but each meeting of the *RMO* includes two faculty and one student, and it is their responsibility to determine if a student receives additional sanctions at the institutional level for engaging in and being responsible for academic misconduct on multiple occasions. During this meeting, a staff member from AIO reads a statement into an audio recording before providing the student with 15 minutes to meet with the *RMO* board. The student may have a prepared statement, or they may walk the board members through any documentation they submitted in advance of the meeting or have brought with them to the meeting. The board may also ask the student questions about any recorded academic misconduct or any documentation provided by the student. Once the student leaves the meeting, the board is required to sanction the student with a notation on their transcript and some form of separation (temporary or permanent) from the institution unless they find that there were extraordinary circumstances and provided a rationale explaining their decision.

Overall, the policy is designed to afford students the opportunity to mess up once without ruining their academic career. It provides an opportunity to repair the relationship between the

instructor and student at the *Mediation*, but the policy has several offshoots that remove the decision from the student's hands. To further create an educational opportunity for students, the *SE Integrity Policy* was updated to include an optional *Remediation Program*, which removes academic misconduct from their institutional student conduct records upon successful completion of the *Remediation Program* by students eligible for record restriction.

The Remediation Program

The post-infraction intervention of interest was the *Remediation Program*, which is housed in the AIO. The program is optional, and it is primarily considered an opportunity for development rather than an assigned sanction, though the *RMO* did impose the program on some students to justify a reduced sanction. Only the students who acknowledge a violation of the academic honesty policy during their *Mediation* — showing their ability to take ownership and responsibility for their actions — are eligible to have their student conduct records restricted. The program was designed to help students work through their academic misconduct, including why it happened and what they can do differently in the future. It further provides students with an opportunity to repair the harm caused by their engagement in academic misconduct, engage in professional development, and promote a culture of academic integrity on campus.

The program achieves these aims by engaging students and helping them understand the importance of academic integrity to both their academic and future professional lives, requiring students to identify areas that require skills building, and connecting students to campus resources to assist their academic and professional goals. It is a multi-step program, and students are warned that it cannot be completed quickly. To complete the program, students must take the following steps: 1) initiate enrollment; 2) complete a questionnaire; 3) complete Southeastern University's online academic integrity module; 4) write a reflection essay; 5) attend a

Restorative Justice Conference (RJC)[1]; 6) submit their Personal Learning Objectives (PLOs); and 7) complete a program review. Once the student has completed these steps, they are marked as "Remediated" in the case management system and their record non-disclosure goes into effect; it can only be revoked if the student receives an additional academic misconduct violation. Because students self-select into the program and there are many steps that students must overcome to complete the program, the incentive is designed to encourage participation and completion. That said, there are self-selection issues that limit participation and it is important to understand the differences between students who choose to participate and those who do not.

Choosing Southeastern University

Teaching and learning or restorative justice-based practices happen at campuses across the country. The University of California, San Diego has a course students take after a violation (Cullen, 2022). The University at Buffalo offers a *Remediation Program* with the opportunity for record restriction (*Remediation*). There are programs at the University of Minnesota that engage in RJCs (*Academic Integrity Matters*), and Achieving with Integrity programs in New Zealand (Stephens & Wangaard, 2016). Instead of an online class exchange for record restriction or a mandatory restorative practice after a violation, the *Remediation Program* at SEU combines the course with restorative practices. SEU offers a unique opportunity to study the full scope of its restorative justice-based practices and programs throughout its academic integrity process, with major moral disrupters (events that cause moral dissonance) at every stage of the academic integrity process, which can be found in *Figure 4.1*.

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[1] In the event a student is unable to attend an RJC (e.g., they are studying away, have accommodations with the disability center for anxiety, etc.) students can substitute this step with an individual meeting with the Remediation Program Coordinator.

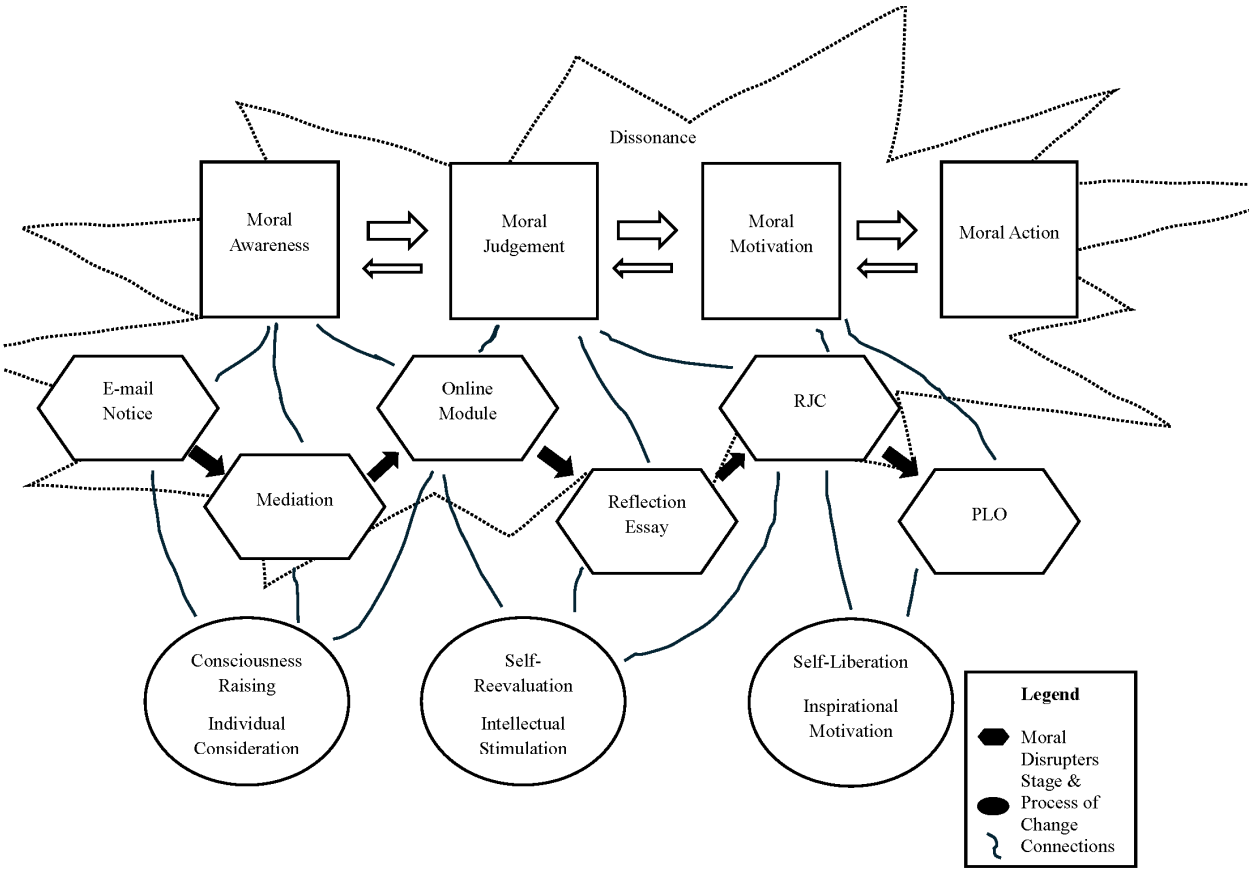

Figure 4.1 Adapted MTC Model with All SEU AIO Engagement

Encompassing the entire academic integrity process, the possible moral disruptors begin with an email notification of alleged academic misconduct. This was considered a possible moral disrupter because it could raise a student's consciousness of academic integrity as a moral decision and cause the students to pause and think about their individual actions. The *Mediation* was another moral disruptor that raised student consciousness of their individual actions in the context of a moral decision. For some students, this was where it ended. For others, restorative justice practices continue in the *Remediation Program*. The *Remediation Program* offered

restorative practices and moral disruptors at every critical stage of its programming. The online academic integrity module and reflection essay could intellectually stimulate the students as they self-reevaluate, potentially progressing their moral decision-making. Finally, the RJC and PLOs could offer students the chance to pivot from self-reevaluation and into self-liberation as they transitioned from focusing on learning from the past to planning for their futures. The academic integrity process at SEU provided a valuable look at an adapted version of Neumeister's (2017) Model of Transformative Change in practice within an academic integrity process.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

This study aimed to examine whether and how a restorative justice-based academic integrity process—particularly its *Remediation Program*—addressed the following research questions:

> *Q_1: What, if any, differences exist between students who experience the academic integrity process at SEU and those who do not?*
>
> *Q_2: How do students who have received an AIO record describe their experiences and perceptions of the academic integrity process?*
>
> *Q_3: How do restorative justice practices within an academic integrity process shape students' perception of academic integrity?*

The survey findings limited were to observing that some change took place during these processes that altered the cheating behaviors students self-report. Unfortunately, the survey data was not powerful enough to interrogate these differences further than acknowledging that they could exist. Although findings are limited, they still provided valuable insight into the power of restorative justice practices in developing student moral decision-making skills.

Qualitative findings suggested that students who were accused of academic misconduct and acknowledged a violation of the academic honesty policy typically fall into one of four types of engagement with moral dissonance—prolonged disruptions to their moral decision-making processes: Never Engagers, Reluctant Engagers, Active Engagers, and Transformers. In the following, I provided composite profiles of students that exemplify each type. Composite

profiles were created from the student interviews and observations and help to provide what some methodologists call “ideal types” (Van Maanen, 2011), while further anonymizing narratives. The findings show that moral disruptors were present not just in the *Remediation Program*, but throughout the entire academic integrity process.

The moral disruptors from Southeast University’s (SEU) academic integrity process included the email notifying students that they were accused of academic misconduct, the *Mediation*, and the different facets of the *Remediation Program*: the academic integrity module, reflection essay, Restorative Justice Conference (RJC), and Personal Learning Objectives (PLOs) (PLOs). Never Engagers and Reluctant Engagers were exposed only to email notice and *Mediation*, with the *Mediation* having positive and negative effects. Active Engagers were exposed to the email, had a positive or neutral *Mediation* experience, and may have attempted the online academic integrity module, but Transformers engaged with all moral disrupters.

In this chapter, I negotiated between the different student composites, identifying where the moral disrupters aided in extending moral dissonance to help students grow in their moral decision-making. I also explained differences between students with and without an academic misconduct record. There were some differences, even with a limited sample. Thus, I concluded that there is some impact of moral decision-making that takes place when students interact with the Academic Integrity Office (AIO), though more research is needed to understand the extent of those differences.

Beyond the Academic Integrity Office: Student Behavior After the Violation

Originally, this dissertation was designed to have the survey data informing the qualitative data, with comparisons between students that had and had not been caught being academically dishonesty, and, within those who had academic integrity violations, comparisons

between those that failed to engage in the *Remediation Program* and both engaged with and completed the *Remediation Program*. This would have informed the four student types composite students: Never Engagers, Reluctant Engagers, Active Engagers, and Transformers. Unfortunately, not enough students completed the survey to provide adequate dialectic analysis. It limited the ability to draw firm conclusions between the groups of interest. What the data does provide is context for those who have engaged in the academic integrity process and those who have not, addressing the research question:

> *Q_1: What, if any, differences exist between students who experience the academic integrity process at SEU and those who do not?*

We can see some differences in the rates of academic misconduct between students who have and AIO record and those who do not, showing that interacting with the AIO reduces self-reported rates of academic misconduct.

Misconduct for All

Ninety-nine percent of the students surveyed self-reported engaging in at least one form of academic misconduct in the last year or since they received a violation from the AIO. This tells us that all of the moral disruption taking place does not help students reach moral action, limiting them to moral motivation as the highest level of moral decision-making students are reaching upon engaging with the AIO. However, there is some hope. Students who did not have an academic misconduct record at the institution were more likely to engage in academic misconduct at greater rates (more than once) than students that had a record for academic misconduct (*Table 5.1*, *Table 5.2*).

Students without an academic misconduct record self-reported engaging in academic misconduct an average of twice ($\bar{x}$ =1.90). All students with no misconduct record self-reported

engaging some form of plagiarism at least once, with 51.55% reporting that they engaged in such behavior at least twice. Over half of the students with no academic misconduct record utilized unauthorized resources and engaged in authorized collaboration at least once, while lying & tampering and misusing generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) were only self-reported by around a quarter of the students with no academic misconduct record. *Table 5.1* provides a breakdown of the rates in which students with no academic misconduct record self-reported cheating behaviors.

Table 5.1 Students with No AIO Interaction

	Mean (SD)	Never	Once	2-4 Times	5-9 Times	10+ Times
Any Misconduct	1.90(1.06)	-	48.45%	26.20%	12.11%	13.24%
Plagiarism	1.16(0.46)	-	86.97%	10.8%	1.98%	0.57%
Unauthorized Resources	1.22(1.32)	44.73%	13.68%	24.50%	9.12%	7.98%
Unauthorized Collaboration	1.15(1.25)	43.07%	19.17%	24.78%	5.31%	7.67%
Lying & Tampering	0.36(0.73)	76.66%	12.62%	9.15%	1.26%	0.32%
GenAI Misuse	0.40(0.90)	78.80%	9.17%	7.45%	2.29%	-

N = 369

Table 5.2 provides an overview of student self-reported cheating behaviors for students that had an academic misconduct record with the AIO. Students, on average, self-reported cheating once after receiving an academic integrity violation ($\bar{x}$ =1.17). Plagiarism, again, is the most frequently engaged in behavior with 87.32% of students self-reporting plagiarism. Students with an academic misconduct record self-report lower rates of using unauthorized resources (44.44%) and misuse of GenAI (11.11%), but greater rates of unauthorized collaboration (75%) and lying & tampering (100%). Academic misconduct is pervasive for undergraduate students from SEU, regardless of whether a student has a violation on record with the AIO. However, there are some small differences between these two groups that should be considered.

Table 5.2 Students with AIO Interaction

	Mean (SD)	Never	Once	2-4 Times	5-9 Times	10+ Times

Any Misconduct	1.17(0.48)	-	86.39%	10.56%	2.50%	0.56%
Plagiarism	1.15(0.42)	-	87.32%	10.42%	2.25%	-
Unauthorized Resources	1.11(1.54)	55.56%	11.11%	11.11%	11.11%	11.11%
Unauthorized Collaboration	1.38(1.3)	25.00%	37.50%	25.00%	-	12.50%
Lying & Tampering	1.5(0.71)	-	50.00%	50.00%	-	-
GenAI Misuse	0.11(0.33)	89.89%	11.11%	-	-	-

N = 9

The Difference an Academic Misconduct Record Makes on Cheating Behavior

To see whether there were measurable differences between the dependent variables related to student's self-reporting of cheating behaviors based on the status of their academic misconduct record, unpaired t-tests were conducted (see *Table 5.3*). In addition, there are unequal variances, so Welch's (1947) formula was used to approximate the degrees of freedom, providing the most accurate representation of whether the groups were equal (H_1: $X_{\text{no record}} \neq X_{\text{record}}$). This test shows that there may be some differences between the students with and without an academic misconduct record when it comes to overall self-reported cheating behavior ($t = 11.82$, $p < .001$) and self-reported misuse of GenAI ($t = 2.39$, $p = 0.03$). However, there are no significant differences between those student groups and plagiarism ($t = 0.37$, $p = 0.71$), unauthorized resources ($t = 0.21$, $p = 0.84$), or unauthorized collaboration ($t = -0.48$, $p = 0.65$). Because the response rate from students with an academic misconduct record was so low, the t-tests offer the strongest statistical data for this project, though it is important to understand the extreme disparity between responses from students with no interaction with AIO (N=369) and those who had interacted with the AIO (N=9).

The results show that students who have interacted with the AIO self-report engaging in less academic misconduct than the students who have not interacted with the AIO. Interactions with AIO were defined has participating in a *Mediation*. This implies that some change happens when students engage in the moral disruptors presented by the AIO throughout the academic

integrity process, though we are unable to narrow down which part of the process is associated with these changes.

Table 5.3 T-tests on Cheating Behavior Between Students With & Without AIO Interaction Record

	t
Any Misconduct	11.82***
Plagiarism	0.37
Unauthorized Resources	0.21
Unauthorized Collaboration	-0.48
Lying & Tampering	-2.27
GenAI Misuse	2.40*

* p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p < .001

Moral Measures

Seeking to understand differences between student decisions and their ethical orientation, several scales were used. The Ethics Position Questionnaire is one such scale, which measures the differences in idealism and relativism for participants (*Table 5.4*). At SEU, the students median scores were lower than the base rate provided by Forsyth et al. (2008). Because I scaled down to 5-items from Forsyth's recommended 9-items, the comparison scale had to be adjusted (Forsyth, 2021). Once adjusted, the base median rate for idealism (36.7) was significantly higher than the median score from SEU students (25). Students at SEU also scored significantly lower in relativism (23) when compared to the base rate (30.3). To further understand where students were situated, O'Boyle and Forsyth (2021) categorized participants. Those with high idealism and low relativism were absolutists, while those with high idealism and high relativism were situationalists. Low idealism and low relativism were labelled exceptionalists, and low idealism with high relativism were subjectivists. Between those with an academic misconduct record and those without, the only difference was for idealism (t = -2.03). With such a low response rate from students with an academic misconduct record, the power of this analysis is limited.

Table 5.4 Ethics Position Questionnaire Results

			No AIO Interaction	AIO Interaction	*t*
	Mean(SD)	Comparison	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
Idealism	25.28(6.51)	36.7	25.18(6.44)	29.88(8.27)	-2.03*
Relativism	22.67(6.92)	30.3	22.69(6.88)	21.38(9.05)	0.53
	Mean(SD)	%			
Absolutist	0.61(0.49)	61.14%	0.61(0.49)	1.00(0.00)	-1.39
Situationalist	0.65(0.48)	65.61%	0.66(0.48)	0.60(0.55)	0.27
Exceptionist	0.34(0.47)	34.39%	0.34(0.48)	0.40(0.55)	-.027
Subjectivist	0.39(0.49)	38.86%	0.39(0.49)	0.00(0.00)	1.39

* p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p < .001

Similarly, the Heinz scenario for the Defining Issues Test (DIT) was adapted for an academic integrity scenario. The DIT measures which moral schema are engaged in a scenario, exemplifying the levels of moral decision-making that can be referenced during a moral decision (Bebeau, 2002; Gungordu et al., 2023; Thoma & Dong, 2014). It is interesting to note that students scored high across all three moral schema, and there were no significant differences between students with an those without an academic misconduct record. Again, there are concerns that the low response rate from students with an academic misconduct record skewed the results.

Table 5.5 DIT-Based Academic Integrity Scenario Results

		No AIO Interaction	AIO Interaction	*t*
	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)	
Personal Interest Schema	0.90(0.30)	0.90(0.30)	1(0)	-0.93
Maintaining Norms Schema	0.93(0.25)	0.93(0.25)	1(0)	-0.76
Post-Conventional Schema	0.81(0.39)	0.81(0.39)	1(0)	-1.38

* p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p < .001

Finally, the McCabe-ICAI Academic Misconduct Instrument (MIAMI) scales of moral judgement and moral disengagement were included (*Table 6*). On average, students at SEU scored neutral in moral judgement, meaning they view academic misconduct as a slight moral

issue. Students also scored closer to neutral on the issue of moral disengagement, neither agreeing or disagreeing with statements related to posited moral exceptions to academic integrity. This suggests that students engaged in moral flexibility when considering academic misconduct. Even more interestingly, students that had engaged with the academic integrity process show no significant differences in moral judgement or moral disengagement compared to students with no academic misconduct record. This is likely due to the low number of respondents that had an academic misconduct record.

Table 5.6 MIAMI Moral Judgement & Moral Disengagement Results

		No AIO Interaction	AIO Interaction	*t*
	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)	
Moral Judgement	2.21(0.73)	2.20(0.73)	2.36(0.99)	-0.59
Moral Disengagement	2.10(0.65)	2.11(0.66)	1.96(0.68)	0.44

* p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p < .001

Further quantitative analysis yielded no significant results (ANOVA, regression), likely due to the low number of respondents that had an academic misconduct record (N=9). Unless the survey were to be re-run and receive a significantly larger response from the students that have an academic misconduct record and participated in the *Remediation Program*, there is little in depth analysis that could be done to show the changes in moral decision-making for students going through the different stages of the academic integrity process, including the *Remediation Program*, at SEU.

Moral Disruption as a Facet of Academic Integrity Process Engagement

The qualitative data focused on students that had not only interacted with the AIO, but also had received an academic misconduct record after acknowledging academic misconduct during their mediation. This allowed me to explore the differences between students who did and did not engage with the *Remediation Program.* Students that engage with the AIO longer encountered more moral dissonance through multiple moral disruptors. *Table 5.7* shows an

overview of student engagement with the academic integrity process with the AIO and which parts of the process acted as a moral disruptor.

Table 5.7 Composite Findings

	Composite	AIO Processes	Moral Disruptors
Never Engager	Jackson	Email Notice Mediation	-
Reluctant Engager	Julie	Email Notice Mediation Start Remediation*	Mediation
Active Engager	Justin	Email Notice Mediation Partial Remediation Program	Email Notice Mediation Online Module Reflection Essay*
Transformer	Jolene	Email Notice Mediation Full Remediation Program	Email Notice Mediation Online Module Reflection Essay Restorative Justice Conference Personal Learning Objective

*The reflection essay was only considered a moral disruptor for the students who completed that portion of the *Remediation Program*

Never Engagers: When Negative Experiences Hinder Moral Decision-Making Growth

"Never Engagers" went through the *Mediation* but fail to engage beyond *Mediation* with the academic integrity process. Specifically, I found that students who failed to progress past *Mediation* spent longer in ordinary conversation/skilled conversation. They relayed information and focused on navigating conflict by managing their image. The students in this group were passionate, but they moved into higher levels of verbal exchange—like personal narrative—when they expressed their discontent with how the process played out, either via timing, lack of support from instructors, or feeling that the process was unfair in some other capacity.

Jackson: The Never Engager

Jackson is the composite student who represents the Never Engager type. Jackson viewed himself as a normal student, like every other student at SEU. He mostly attended class and completed work as assigned, but he took shortcuts like every other student to submit work on

time that gets a good grade. When Jackson was reported by his instructor to the AIO for possible academic misconduct, he was shocked and appalled. He wondered what he did wrong, and he believed that he was only doing what he saw his peers doing. His way of doing work was to take shortcuts but that was expected. He knew people in the class did the same thing, but they were not reported to the integrity office. He did not view himself as a dishonest person.

In *Mediation* with the instructor, Jackson was defensive and disengaged. He did not understand why his case was reported to the integrity office instead of being discussed privately. The instructor became his adversary, and Jackson never viewed them the same. There was no relationship with the instructor moving forward, even if Jackson decided to remain in the class. Though Jackson decided to acknowledge the violation, he felt like the whole thing was unfair, and all he wanted was to forget that this ever happened. When the mediator introduced the idea of the *Remediation Program*, Jackson scoffed because he could not see any material advantage for completing it. There was no beneficial link.

After his experience with the AIO, Jackson changed his approach to academic work. He was mistrustful, and he did not want to work with his peers. He tried to avoid procrastinating more, but his motivations were rooted in fear of being caught cheating rather than any actual desire to change.

Moral Disengagement: When the Process is a Problem

Like the example of Jackson in the above composite profile, Ari found the academic integrity process to be challenging. He spoke of feeling scared and alone throughout the process of resolving his case:

> The feeling was…something that I can't really describe, but it was….awful, terrible. I felt like I was being treated like a criminal and when in fact the reality was that it was something unintentional, and I actually reported myself…

> …Another thing that I wanted to point out, and I think nobody heard me, and I was really sad about this issue, that we have all the authorities here talking, talking a big game, actually that they are there for students. When in fact, they weren't.

All student participants going through the academic integrity process experienced surprise at receiving the notice of possible academic misconduct from the AIO. Never Engagers often became stuck in negative perception upon receipt of the notice.

Never Engagers were also prone to lament procedural aspects of their dealings with the AIO. Iris and V, for example, were specifically upset about the timing of their email from the integrity office. Iris and her peer were accused of collusion and plagiarism; they received the email with information of their allegation shortly before walking into an important exam, which impacted their exam performance. V received his notice while on spring break with his family, and he struggled to schedule his *Mediation*:

> But like the cons I had were, um, their persistence, I guess you could say. Because I just remember I had received an email over spring break. And like, I don't know about like them, but they could have picked like a better timing to send that email out. Because I had woken up like spring break and I checked my phone for my emails. And they're just kind of like, can you just ruin the flow of my day. And I'm like, you know, I'm on break. I'm with my family. I just want to enjoy. And then I have this on my conscience.
>
> And then another thing is the…while it was like spring break and like we were just adjusting back to school, they were really persistent on me like getting a meeting done. I had like two exams that week. So, I was like, you know, my phone was on do not disturb. You know, I was just trying to get my stuff done. An, you know, they were like sending out warnings for um, like, you know, they'll stop my…they won't let me register for classes and whatnot. So I was like, alright, you know what, here's a meeting early morning.

Timing is not something that the AIO has control over, as the academic integrity policy provides specific parameters on timing for faculty reporting, and they are unable to see the assessment schedule for every student in every course. However, it is important to note student concerns over timing, as this resentment for the timing can set the tone for the *Mediation*.

The relationship with the reporting faculty before the *Mediation* was another factor that impacted students' perception of academic integrity and the academic integrity process at SEU. Typically, the Never Engagers had negative relationships with the reporting faculty member before the *Mediation*, and the academic integrity process exacerbated those negative relationships. Iris was brought to the AIO by a faculty member that students in her program already disliked, and the instructor had a reputation for dismissing student questions and "hazing" the students in the class. She felt that she took accountability in the *Mediation*, but that the faculty failed to do anything more than try to ruin her career:

> I don't think that there was clear enough instructions from the instructor and that was never like, there was never any ownership of that, which is what really irks my side. And like…l will forever disdain this person for it because I think she tried to ruin my career. It feels malicious, and like that's a very rare thing in my world. I don't think people are intentionally malicious, and I think she was.

Ari, similarly, was upset with his faculty for reporting him because he had self-reported possible issues after learning that he had made an error with his submission. Negative relationships that were viewed as an issue perpetuated by the faculty limited the dissonance that could have been achieved in a *Mediation*.

While not all Never Engagers felt that faculty were intentionally malicious, some still believed that there would not be a reason to engage in the *Mediation*. Before her *Mediation*, Leona presumed her case would not be positive, and she was detached during her *Mediation*:

> I had also heard stories of people that had an academic dishonesty [case], and they were able to talk with the teacher about it first and stuff, but our teacher wasn't even willing to talk to us 'til the honesty meeting. So, I could already tell what the consequences would be. I knew [he] wasn't going to be like, nice about the situation, like help us alleviate any stress from it. So, I just knew what the…what it would result in.

Regardless of whether the instructor was responsible for the negative relationship, the student perception of their instructor preceding their meeting played a heavy role in students' feelings about the academic integrity process.

Neutral and even positive relationships going into the *Mediation* did not guarantee that moral disruption would take place. When Bobby's instructor tried to connect with Bobby during his meeting, it was ineffective because Bobby viewed the course as irrelevant to major and his future:

> Well, it wasn't that bad because it's an extra large class. So, there's maybe like 80 to 100 students in the class. So, this is my first time ever actually having a conversation with her…And then moving forward it was still the exact same. Like, you don't notice me in a room full of 100 people. So, I was talking to a stranger, really…I would say it makes int better because there's no feelings of pity of disappointment. On my end, I don't feel it because like, I don't know who you are, so why would I care that you're disappointed? You know what I'm saying? Like, you don't really hold any value in my life besides [the one class] you know?

Anonymity in the class contributed to the violation and to Bobby's perceptions of the academic integrity process.

In contrast, V focused on "what I did wrong, what I could do to improve what I did wrong, and how do I, like, apologize for it. Or how do I even explain myself without, you know, digging myself deeper into a hole." Although he did not have a negative relationship with his instructor before his *Mediation*, he was upset by the instructor addressing the large scale of academic misconduct in the class. He referred to this as the instructor issuing "order 66," a reference to the popular movie *Star Wars*, when Senator Palpatine ordered the execution of the Jedi knights as a part of his plot to become galactic the emperor. Although V acknowledged a violation in his *Mediation*, he continued to call his violation "alleged" and "hearsay" in his interview.

When the meeting failed to act as a disruptor to moral decision-making, students were numb to the potential value. Vera found the process to be, not terrible, but just not impactful:

> I mean, I walked there from my apartment, and we just had a quick little chitchat…and they were like, oh this is your first in[fraction]. If you ever do it again, you'll like get more dire consequences, yada, yada, yada…and I went back to my apartment and played video games.

Ari similarly felt like the meeting was not helpful, "We were discussing this and he was the person from academic honesty was…kind of clarifying things they point. And then getting down to the paper and signing and just leaving the office." Because Leona had done her research by accessing the available data on the AIO's website and scoping out online discussion boards like Reddit, she just wanted the meeting to be over:

> I just felt very over it. I feel like I had processed everything that was already going on…I didn't have many emotions I just, I felt…like, okay, I know what's about to happen. And I think I also felt like it was a bit unfair knowing like other people that had also had um worked together and didn't get an academic dishonesty sanction so just like, it's just crazy that it's us have like but I was….I took accountability like we talked about. I was just very quiet in the meeting. I explained like, I'm sorry for what happened and um ready to accept the consequences because they give us an option of like not accepting the consequences and taking it up…further and like talking about it more but I wasn't even ready to do all that. I wasn't, I just wanted it to be over with, to be honest.

In an effort to resolve the potential academic misconduct, students failed to self-reevaluate. Without this reflection, there was no possibility of moral disruption.

For students like Jackson, the *Remediation Program* was never really an option. Bobby viewed the *Remediation Program* similarly to the composite Never Engager; he saw no incentive to engage with the *Remediation Program*, "I don't see how it could be beneficial to me personally…So, not matter, I don't believe that in any way this would affect my life beyond [SEU]." Leona said that the incentive for the *Remediation Program* was limited in scope and did not impact her directly. Without a way for her to alter her sanction, Leona said, "I think I was like upset at first and then I just tried to like act like it never happened…"

Though the incentive was not strong enough for some students, V maintained that the entire process was overwhelming and that he would have done the program if it had been better advertised or if there had been secondary outreach that was explicitly telling students when to begin the process:

> Why are you telling me at this [interview]? Why can't I just like, be sent like and email, get a phone call or a text for this program? Like it's…I just, the whole program thing just seemed like…parole kind of, but like no one's helping you out in it.

Frustration from the academic integrity process bled into the student perception of the AIO and its programs. Regardless of the *Mediation*, there was some scope of change in how students approached their academic work.

The academic integrity meeting did not disrupt the student moral decision-making process, but it did change how the Never Engagers approached academic work. Bobby found that taking the shortcut was the bad decision instead of the academic dishonesty, and he thought that the process overall was not terrible because

> …it has helped me change my approach to these classes. Two is helping me learn from that experience and that do not just downright copy/paste like, right? Be like at least…so this isn't really like a really 'don't do it' I learned from it. It's more like a 'Listen, why would you copy and paste? Be smart about what you're doing in your work.' Like that just was that quite put like so just put it simply, that was dumb. It was a very dumb decision. It was a very dumb act. If I could go back, I wish I would have just taken my time, like just submitted it late instead of just rushing.

Vera also found that the *Mediation* did little to change her approach, but it did change how she felt about approaching her work. She claims to have continued to "do my work like usual" while also admitting that "I just…do everything by myself. I do not ask for help…I don't do any of that just in case something like that is not allowed." Zora mentioned similar distrust of working with others and being "a lot more nervous about my work, aware, just a lack of confidence…It kind of made me withdraw from like, from, I guess, putting my fullest extent as weirdly as it sounds."

For Never Engagers, restorative justice practices alone were not an effective strategy to engage in dissonance that would change their moral schema. The *Mediation* begat more conflict, and where shame existed, students perceived no effort to reintegrate them into the SEU community. Instead, they remained outsiders, and they had to rely on outside support from friends and family. Never Engagers remained morally disengaged; they maintained their self-image as moral because they viewed their action as not *that* bad compared to others, or because academic misconduct is not as bad as substance use/abuse or poor relationships with family. There could be an opportunity to help Never Engagers build their moral decision-making skills if the AIO could get the Never Engagers to participate in the *Remediation Program*. However, student enrollment for the *Remediation Program* is a challenge the AIO should strategize to overcome.

Reluctant Engagement: When the Process Drags Students Along

While Never Engagers failed to have their moral decision-making skills disrupted, the students that fall under the "Reluctant Engager" umbrella did see some changes, even if those changes were limited. Reluctant Engagers maintained ordinary and skilled conversation, but they fleetingly broached into personal narrative and dialogue. The transitions were most common when these students discussed how the process changed them. Typically, this change was linked to some form of reflection or self-reevaluation.

Julie: The Reluctant Engager

A Reluctant Engager did experience some disruption in their moral thinking, but it often appeared begrudgingly, as they tried to manage their self-image, and may be tied more towards future integrity rather than academic integrity. Julie embodies this reluctance, because her case was more nuanced. She had no intent to cheat, but she was involved in academic misconduct.

When she got her notice from the integrity office, she was shocked and confused, because she had not realized she had engaged in any misconduct when she submitted her work.

This confusion caused a large amount of stress and anxiety while she waited for her *Mediation* meeting. Once she got to the meeting, it was much better, and she found the process helpful. She engaged in dialogue with the faculty and found that the professional, friendly AIO staff were helpful in alleviating stress and confusion. After the *Mediation*, Julie continued in the class, and she even went to the instructor's office hours.

As for the *Remediation Program*, while the incentive seemed nice, it was not enough for Julie to complete the program. She did not think she needed the non-disclosure, and when her next semester started with new coursework, participation in the program fell to the wayside. Furthermore, Julie did not think her infraction was that bad in the grand scheme of things, the whole case was not her fault.

From Never Engaging to Experiencing Moral Disruption Reluctantly

Reluctant Engagers were upset by the academic integrity process because they often described feeling more like bystanders or even victims than actual offenders. They were concerned by the lack of intent on their end to engage in academic misconduct, even if they acknowledged that their behavior resulted in academic work that was not up to the standards of integrity. Avery, for example, blamed her partners for dragging her into academic misconduct. Vera, on the other hand, claimed that she did not know she could not use a tool to assist her academic work because a previous instructor had allowed the use of the tool. Zora, interestingly, knew that her group mate had been dishonest on a group project, but she blamed herself only for not being assertive, "So I can't blame anyone other than, like, not being more, I guess, assertive in a group setting."

Though the *Mediation* was often considered stressful, Reluctant Engagers tended to maintain a better relationship with the faculty. Zora noted that she appreciated her instructor being matter of fact when presenting evidence against her, and that she was glad that he called it a learning experience from a mistake. This led Zora to continue approaching her instructor in group settings after her *Mediation*. Vera also maintained a positive relationship with her faculty, calling her relationship "…really strong…I don't know. I really liked her as an instructor, and she called me out on my BS on that one assignment, and I appreciated that…and it helped me learn a lot more."

Students like Julie, the Reluctant Engager exemplar, did indicate some disruption to the moral schema. However, it was not related to engaging in academic misconduct. For Zora, evidence in the meeting with the instructor forced her to consider learning as a goal:

> Learning is definitely a privilege like you should definitely learn like that type of thing. Fostering learning as something a lot more…helpful because a least from my experiences like cheating doesn't get you anywhere. It's learning that does, right?

Similarly, Bobby did acknowledge that going through the academic integrity process changed how he viewed learning:

> So for me, I guess educational goals like it changed the approach I have. Which I believe that is a goal in itself because I'm still working towards that outcome. So when I say to be more specific, when I say it changed my approach, I am approaching my studies with a study, study, study mentality. I need to study as much as I can to actually grasp the material. And instead of using education as a memorization device. It's more so used as a I'm going to say like understanding like I'm understanding it. It's being soaked in. It's like, I'm using my educational knowledges I guess….I've had with this communications major, I took a communications class last semester. The same things that I'm learning now, they're not necessarily being built upon, but they're being used in connection like they're being used together.

These changing views on the goals of education show some moral disruption, though it is not clear whether this was enough to move the needle on moral decision-making processes.

Reluctant Engagers could acknowledge some value in the *Mediation* process, and sometimes they pursued the *Remediation Program*.

Avery and Zora were both interested in the *Remediation Program* for the record non-disclosure. Zora had technical issues with the online module, and these issues stopped her from finishing the program saying, "After all that, I was like…they're not making it any easier for me to finish this. And it just seemed like another punishment, so I was like, I'm good." Vera, on the other hand, didn't see the point of the *Remediation Program*. She felt that her violation was not egregious enough to need remediation:

> Not to sound stupid, but it's just…sounds a lot like a lot of work for not the most, like the most….It's not a reward that really matters to me, you know?...Especially since I have a minor in[fraction], and I'm sure of other people have like huge in[fractions]. They probably will do it. Mine is extremely minor, so I don't think it really would be worth the time and effort.

Reluctant Engagers offer a mixed bag in their perceptions of the academic integrity process and remediation. While not opposed to the *Mediation* or the *Remediation Program*, the process was not always effective at prolonging moral dissonance to effect change in moral decision-making.

Restorative justice practices were somewhat effective with Reluctant Engagers. The *Mediation* was not a good experience, but it was a useful step that raised student consciousness. Instructors were viewed more favorably, as they displayed some form of empathy or understanding for students, seeing them as people rather than criminals; reintegrative shaming was more impactful. Not only did instructors provide empathy, but students were more open to their instructors because the relationship going into the *Mediation* was either neutral or positive. However, Reluctant Engagers were limited in their reflection of their actions, and any change in orientation was framed around the idea that engaging in academic misconduct limits their personal learning. If the students had completed the *Remediation Program*, there would have

likely been more substantial and sustained moral disruption that would have assisted them in growing moral decision-making skills.

Active Engagers

Students that fall under the "Active Engager" umbrella had a raised consciousness and participated in some form of self-reevaluation. Active Engagers spent most of their interview engaging in personal narratives and skilled conversation. They were right on the cusp of becoming Transformers and probably would have been able to exchange in more dialogue—where the parties exchange in "higher levels of spontaneous, ecstatic mutuality" (Saldaña, 2016)—within their interviews if they had completed the *Remediation Program* and extended their moral dissonance to reach higher ordered moral decision-making.

Justin: The Active Engager

Actively engaged in the full academic integrity process, Justin nearly completed the *Remediation Program*. He knew that he cheated; he did not deny his wrongdoing. His moral schema was disrupted at several stages: receiving the email, during his *Mediation*, and when attempting the *Remediation Program*.

When Justin got an email about academic misconduct, his heart dropped. He was glad to have time between the email and the *Mediation*, because it provided the opportunity to sit with his anxiety. He felt that he deserved the stress of waiting. The *Mediation* itself was not bad, and he could not imagine a process that would be better for the instructor or him. Justin felt that his instructor was empathetic, and the mediator was soothing. While he was ashamed of his actions, he did not feel like an outcast, and he was able to reintegrate into the student body.

Justin started the *Remediation Program*. He enjoyed the online module. While he mentioned that the videos were corny, he was glad to have some other examples of academic

misconduct. He was invested in the outcomes for the students in those examples. Justin also wrote the reflection essay, which he found equal parts challenging and illuminating. It made him think about his actions in conjunction with who he views himself to be. He failed to complete the program because he did not attend an RJC or completed any PLOs, but he felt confident returning to coursework.

Moral Disruption Activation: Active Engagers and Self-Reevaluation

When a student like Justin was open to the academic integrity process and attempted the *Remediation Program*, they were considered an "Active Engager." These students felt that their academic misconduct was clear-cut and very obviously wrong. Their first disruption to moral schema occurred when they received the first communication from the AIO, because it shook their view of themselves. As Bailey reflected,

> I saw it and like my heart just dropped because I mean, I just didn't really know what that meant for me. I mean, as soon as I got it, ONE I was embarrassed, like so embarrassed, like so shameful because like I don't know. I just feel like that's not me. I, like, immediately felt shameful. And then I was like, well, I'm failing. I'm going to fail the class. Like I'm going to have to retake this class just shameful and then just like aggravated was just my instant feelings.

Like the Never Engagers and Reluctant Engagers, Active Engagers spoke of the notice with shock and dread. However, the time between the notice and the *Mediation* was spent differently. Active Engagers sat with the emotions during this time period, engaging in self-reevaluation. For Opal, this time was beneficial:

> It was a good amount of anxiety to sit with because it was the consequences of my own actions. And so I think that I purposely didn't go to my parents because…I felt like I needed to go through that alone because I did it to myself…

Initial reflection was a powerful moral disrupter for Active Engagers.

Similar to Jenna, the Active Engagers viewed the academic integrity process as stressful but necessary. They also saw their peers getting away with cheating, but they did not resent the fact that they were the students caught out.

> I would say that I mean, being a college student, it's very prevalent. Literally like everyone has cheated at least once, if not constantly. I think that I am glad that I got caught because, like I said, it was…you know something that I needed, and also it was something…I was able to learn a lesson without…without taking too much of a hit. And I guess at the beginning I was like a little upset because I was like, dang, everyone does this. Like, how was I the only one that got caught? But, um, I feel like it's like kind of a life lesson you know. Like that doesn't just because everyone's doing it doesn't mean…you'll get away with it or that you should…do it. (Opal)

Active Engagers acknowledged that their actions were wrong, regardless of the actions of their peers. This is critical in maintaining the moral dissonance into the *Mediation*.

During the *Mediation*, the attitudes of the mediator and instructor were pivotal in these students' views of the process. Nihar was "sweating" and "shaking" going into his *Mediation*, but overall found that "it was helpful in, like, understanding, like what I can do next time. Like what resources I could go to if I ever needed, um, like help with that stuff." Nihar's experience with reintegrative shaming helped him accept failing the course as a sanction because the mediator was "somewhat reassuring just saying like, hey it was a mistake and everyone makes mistakes, but we learn from them. And I think that was helpful for me. Because it kinda helped calm me down."

For Bailey, the fear that everyone would see her and think "this is a cheater" was eased by the kindness of the AIO staff and empathy from her instructor. After her meeting, she felt that "it was like nothing ever happened. Basically, that's how she treated me, which I thought was awesome." Reintegrative shaming was clearly present for Bailey:

> When I first arrived and they were already sitting there, I was definitely still embarrassed because like seeing her face to face for the first time after and I'm like just so embarrassed. Like I don't know. It is [an] embarrassing, shameful

> process. Buth then once I sat down, she was very, both of them were very like warm and welcoming and like, obviously, they've done this before. So once like that came to our realization and like she's not like judging me. She doesn't think I'm like a terrible person because this happened. Then I like, kind of relaxed a little bit and the way she explains like my situation to the mediator. It also just made me relax more. I wasn't like she was like judging me or I don't know. I just felt way more comfortable once I started like sitting down. I realized I was worried for nothing basically.

Opal also took comfort from the actions of the mediator and faculty:

> Honestly, I think that they did a good job. They were really professional. And, you know, I was in the wrong in that situation. I'm not going to try and like say that I wasn't, but I think that they're really professional. I think that everyone, the professor too, was really understanding. And, you know, he wanted to just get it solved, I guess. So that was good, and they had like a [mediator] in the Zoom call, which I thought was once again, just professional and it was well done.

Even though Opal felt that the meeting was "confrontational" she was

> …glad that [the instructor] was there. You could see that he was disappointed. And I think that that was a reality check for me and um I think that him being there was helpful…like he was teaching this class because he wanted to helps us and he wanted us to learn….he felt bad and he didn't want to harm our futures in any way, but obviously you know they have to be consequences to your actions.

Similarly, Jenna found process was "not judgmental" and she recognized that the support from her instructor made the difference for her case:

> And I got, I got very lucky. I got very, very lucky, um, that I had a TA or a teacher who maybe was empathetic towards my situation or maybe sensed that, you know, I truly did not mean, like I didn't have ill intent. I was really just, like, desperate in that moment, and I didn't want to do badly.

Faculty relationships for Active Engagers began to repair as expected in restorative processes. Instructors in these cases balanced accountability with compassion, often with the help of the mediator.

Jenna also found that the demeanor of the mediator and empathy from her instructor made all of the difference. She was nervous going into the meeting, but felt

> that the mannerisms like of the mediator, like the way that they mediator was acting like did really calm me down because I was expecting to go in there and

> like everyone's mad at me. And like everyone hates me and like wants to expel me like that. That's kind of what I felt going in, you know, like…I did something wrong and I'm going in there and people are upset and disappointed.

After her meeting, Jenna was "still disappointed in myself but I was pretty satisfied with the outcome…" Jenna's case was the first fall semester after the *Remediation Program* had been implemented, and she lamented that she had not completed the program, "Because I feel like I would have cared about, you know, the option to…seal that record." While acknowledging that she may have forgotten if the mediator had discussed the *Remediation Program*, she remained disappointed that she had not participated in it.

Nihar began the *Remediation Program* after admitting that it was hard to take accountability, and he noted that the lingering guilt he felt remained until he completed the online module. Nihar failed to make it past the module, but he felt that the module was instrumental in his success as a student today.

> I wanted to learn like other strategies apart from just like saying 'hey don't plagiarize' but like what other things I can do to prevent that from ever happening…there was a lot of emphasis on time management stuff. So some strategies to use like time blocking and like scheduling and stuff like that were mentioned in the program. And I've begun to use those and it's become very useful for me.

Nihar attempted the *Remediation Program*, and he made significant progress in his moral dissonance. Opal also signed up for the *Remediation Program*, but she ran out of time to complete the program after she was confronted with stressful semester. She did complete some of the online module, and she found that

> It didn't feel condescending in any way. I did feel like it was like a bit like elementary school. Like where it was like cheating is wrong and like they kind of walk you through like the different types of cheating I guess. Which I think that that is something that college students are aware of. It's just that sometimes you get into a situation where there's a deadline or things get difficult or something happens and they you just like you know what you're doing its' just that you weighed your odds and you decided to make a bad decision.

Unlike Nihar and Opal, who both knew they had not completed the *Remediation Program*, Bailey believed that she had finished, but she failed to attend an RJC and complete PLOs. She originally signed up to the *Remediation Program* to receive the record restriction, and she experienced moral disruptions when completing the online academic integrity module and her reflection essay. Bailed called the academic integrity module "pretty helpful just because me personally, I was already like mad at myself for doing it…it was kind of helpful to just, you know…take a step back and like look at you know yourself personally." After seeing herself in the scenarios, Bailey found deep value in the reflective essay:

> I feel like reflecting on that cheating is or like the academic honesty policy is like I don't know, morally like your responsibilities and going against them, I feel like kind of shows your character and I know I'm someone of good character. So just the fact that I did go against them was kind of like shameful, and, like, made me disappointed in myself so just like the whole just looking at my character and seeing how like, okay, someone with good character would probably not do those things. And so, I don't know, I guess just…I can't thinking character when I was doing that like I know I'd have good characters so I should you know all these lists of things to do basically.

Active Engagers had *Mediations* that met the core tenets of restorative justice practices and were often likely to begin the *Remediation Program* but failed to complete it.

Active Engagers saw the academic integrity process and remediation as part of their personal growth.

> …most things happen because of a reason that everything works out the way it's supposed to…So, I'm kind of glad that it happened because it just sort of got me out of a situation that I probably, you know, my grades would have just gotten worse. (Jenna)

> I think that- I think it was…good. I think that like maybe a lot of times when people get into a situation like this, they want to blame like the system, or-or you know whatever. But I can admit that I was in the wrong, but I didn't feel…Like I felt like the people there still wanted to help me and still wanted to you know, they just wanted to just get me to see what I did was wrong and change that, but change that I think that I was owed that I was owed discipline or like that discipling talking to and like the consequences. And they did it in a graceful way. (Opal)

> I had a really good experience. Honestly, I'm very shocked because I always kind of viewed them negatively, like king of um…they're the bad guys that are wanting to get onto you basically. Um. So, I feel like I always had a negative perception of them until I had an experience with them, if that makes sense. Because like I said, I had a great experience with them. I felt like they were very helpful, and despite the fact that you are like basically in trouble, they also want to be there to help you, if that makes sense and that's not…that wasn't my opinion of them before. (Bailey)

Each of the Active Engagers experienced moral engagement around academic work, and restorative justice practices played a key role in this disruption. They felt shame for their actions, but, as Bailey put it, "I mean, it could be a learning experience. So, hey, this happened one singular time and it's never going to happen again." Active Engagers were open to changing themselves, and they spent less time managing their self-image, and more time engaging in tying together their reflection on their past behavior with who they want to be in the future.

Transformers

"Transformers" progressed beyond Active Engagers because they had additional opportunities to extend their moral dissonance, engaging in consciousness raising, self-reevaluation, and self-liberation. This was seen when Transformers offered more personal narratives and dialogue during their interviews. High level conversation that raised mutual discourse was evidenced by a shared understanding of academic integrity through experiencing the full scope of the academic integrity process, including the *Remediation Program*.

Jolene: The Transformer

As a Transformer, Jolene knew that the egregiousness and intent behind her case was not the key issue. Decisions made related to academic work—and future professional work—should be undertaken deliberately, offering no question that it was completed with integrity. Jolene was grateful for the experience with the AIO, and her moral schema was disrupted continuously throughout the entire academic integrity process.

The email was a shock to receive, but the *Mediation* was illuminating. She learned a lot in the meeting, and she felt like the instructor was on her side, even though they reported Jolene to the AIO. After the meeting, Jolene knew that she was going to complete the remediation process.

Not only was the non-disclosure incentive relevant to her future goals, but Jolene knew that she needed help building back her confidence and self-efficacy. She finished the module and reflection essay quickly, but the greatest value of the remediation was the RJC. It buoyed her, and it made her feel like she was not alone in her struggles. The RJC also helped her realize how difficult going through the process was; it reaffirmed her commitment to personal, professional, and academic integrity moving forward. Jolene also liked that her PLOs were future oriented, helping her continue to be the student she wanted to be. She finished her PLOs shortly after her RJC, and her habits today are a result of those objectives.

Beginning to Transform Student Moral Decision-Making

Students like Jolene were transformed during their experiences with restorative justice practices. While similar to the Active Engagers, the primary difference was their completion of the *Remediation Program*, particularly the RJC and PLOs. Though the circumstances of their completion in the *Remediation Program* varied, Transformers extended moral dissonance by interacting with every moral disruptor offered by the AIO, and they achieved the greatest changes in moral decision-making.

Graham was required to complete the *Remediation Program* by the *Review of Multiple Offenses (RMO)* after he had engaged in academic misconduct multiple times. The *RMO* sanctioned Graham to a one semester suspension, provided he engaged critically with and completed the *Remediation Program*. Palmer and Avery engaged in the program purely for

extrinsic purposes, as the record restriction would assist in their future goals. Given the different nature of their violations, it is interesting that all Transformers have come to have similar views of the process and the *Remediation Program*. For Palmer, she initially felt that her academic misconduct case was inadvertent and not serious.

> Obviously, we were all very surprised and…felt honestly very bad because we didn't expect to get it in a class like a []. I feel like if you think about academic dishonesty, it's, like, purposely maybe like using AI or like plagiarizing the paper, but we had just done, like, an assignment, and answered all of our questions differently. So we honestly had not idea what part we did the dishonesty about. (Palmer)

Avery was also upset by the violation. She initially blamed her group mate for the entire affair, but she understood why she was involved after going through the academic integrity process and *Remediation Program*, "I definitely felt disappointed in myself…and I was just in a state of like distress and confusion, I guess, because I was confused as to why I was there. But I understand why now. I understand…what could have gone differently." Regardless of the initial reaction to the academic misconduct notice, Transformers speak differently about their perceptions of the notice than Never Engagers, practicing more empathy for both themselves and the other parties involved.

The *Mediation* is another example of the varying experiences that were reflected on differently by transformers. For example, Avery was less engaged in her *Mediation*, limiting some of her disequilibrium to her moral schema. However, the *Mediation* process was much better than Palmer had expected:

> Honestly, I thought it would be like scary, and like, like an interview. But when I went in, it was more of a discussion and it was a very positive experience. I though it might be like condescending or they would still, like, be mad. We all just, like, reflected, and the professor, she was like not condescending and she was really nice about it. And she…said, 'Obviously, I didn't want this to happen, but we just have to go through with the rules.' And it was just a discussion that wasn't too hard on anyone. And we all just kind of reflected about what happened.

Palmer view was that the *Mediation* let her release her conscience; she said that it "felt better to get it out."

Graham's situation was as similar as it was unique. He did not speak much about his *Mediations* because he had an additional layer of process—the *RMO*—to handle his multiple infractions. This additional step in the academic integrity process was challenging, as it forced Graham to begin his reflection journey.

> They weren't difficult questions. But it was a little difficult to talk about it, obviously, because you're…it's not fun talking about something that you did that was wrong. But they weren't difficult and there weren't difficult with me either. Like they were very nice. Um. But, you know, they're-they're not joking with you. They're very stern and serious. And…Yeah, they just…You know, they're just trying to get to the bottom of why you do it…And they're trying to be fair, but also like they want you to recognize what you did was wrong and they're-they're trying to like sort out a punishment for you. (Graham)

Graham was grateful for his experience, saying that he was:

> grateful that it was only a suspension…Even though I'm not actually in school, I wanted to you know, learn as much as I could. And then obviously just like try to be better, try to work on myself and, you know, recognize why I cheated, why I do stuff like that, and you know try to prevent myself in the future from committing errors like that.

Meditation was a key moment for moral disruption for Transformers. Nell, Hallie, Rich, Meg, and Ren received compassion from their faculty during their *Mediation*. When Hallie described her *Mediation*, she said that she had,

> never been more anxious, and I was dreading the conversation. However, when the meeting began, both my professor and the mediator showed me such grace and kindness that I was genuinely moved. I wasn't expecting compassion, but they treated me with understanding and respect, which made the whole experience more manageable."

Similarly, Nell learned that her instructor was upset to hear Nell was scared to ask for help during the *Mediation*. This radically altered how Nell viewed the instructor, it "flipped a switch" in her. After the *Mediation*, Nell finally got the help she needed. Fae emailed her instructor after

the *Mediation* to apologize; she knew the instructor was disappointed, but she acknowledged that the instructor was understanding.

Transformers viewed the initial part of the academic integrity process – the notice and the *Mediation* – as a net positive. This started their moral disruption through self-reevaluation. The disruption was extended by completing the entire *Remediation Program*. Similar to Active Engagers, Transformers found the academic integrity module and personal reflection that start of the *Remediation Program* to be instrumental in facilitating self-reevaluation and beginning the process of self-liberation.

The Role of the Remediation Program for Transformers

Regardless of why the students participated in the *Remediation Program*, they all found multiple points at which their previous viewpoints were challenged. For Palmer, the online module was particularly helpful because it provided:

> …examples of people that were written up for academic dishonesty and some of the videos did make me say 'like, oh, I never even like considered that that could like make me be written up.' So I feel like that honestly was a big part that like opened my eyes and taught me more about the program or how to be careful…Honestly, I think that the videos were probably an eight (on a scale to 10) usefulness even over like the pause and reflect.

Palmer felt invested in the outcomes of the examples, whereas she found that she was restricted by the reflection essay. Avery also struggled with the reflection essay, because she "was still in a state of confusion at that point and I was just mad a little bit." She "really had to think about why [it] violated certain policies. And I actually looked over the syllabus and the expectations of the [course] and talked to my groupmate a little bit about it…" Despite her reservations about the reflection essay, Avery's reflection showed how deeply she understood the repercussions of dishonesty. She wrote, "I have reflected on my actions and behaviors which were extremely

unacceptable for any school or university. After going through an experience like this, I have realized my actions jeopardized my personal integrity…"

Graham, on the other hand, found the reflection essay to be illuminating, "It helped me think about why you know why like I keep saying it, but why do things, why I cheated and how to break that cycle basically." An applied reflection was required as a sanction for one of his violations, which looked at how lapses in integrity can impact professionals in his chosen field of study. Graham also reflected in preparation for his meeting with the board for multiple infractions. As a part of these exercises, the remediation reflection forced him to identify that his largest struggles were time management, attending class, and utilizing office hours, which he described as, "being unprepared for exams, not being organized with my time, and simply being lazy."

Restorative Justice Conferences

Transformers were the only group of students to complete the RJCs, and they reported the largest disruption to moral schema happened during the restorative justice meetings. Both Avery and Graham experienced reintegrative shaming during the RJCs. Like Jolene, our model Transformer, students walk into the AIO for the second time for their RJC. From start to finish, RJCs provided moral dissonance. Students experienced shame, took personal accountability, understood the role of trust and fairness, and received the support they needed to reintegrate into the university community.

RJCs began with similar processes for the students. They checked-in with the administrator sitting at the front desk and anxiously took seats in one the gray armchairs lined up along one of three walls in the waiting room. One wall is brightly colored, with the phrase "A culture of honesty earns a degree of respect" emblazoned in white letters. Nerves about the RJC

permeated the atmosphere as more students shuffled in, all of whom were fidgeting and anxious. Then, a young-looking graduate student entered the waiting room. With a soft smile and a calm voice, she invited the students to follow her into a conference room across the hall.

The room was larger than a typical office, with a large oblong table that sat six to eight people in black office chairs. Neutral walls were broken with historical photos of the building, and a TV covered one entire wall. The young woman sat at one end of the table, while a faculty member was already sitting at the wooden table. The woman invited the students to sit down wherever they felt comfortable, and most of the students banded together on one side of the table across from the faculty. The women began the RJC by thanking everyone for their presence and introducing herself as Juan, the facilitator for the RJC. Juan then asked everyone to introduce themselves and define their role in the meeting. This was how the students learned that one student w as a peer educator, while the rest were also here because they cheated. Juan then laid out ground rules for the meeting; the rules involved respect, honesty, and confidentiality. Once the rules were defined, real work began.

Moments of Shaming

Each RJC began with the same questions: Why were students there? The RJC facilitator asked the students to explain how they engaged in academic misconduct and what factors led to that decision. This should be an easy question, because the students each have a copy of their reflection essays in front of them. It was embarrassing, though, to admit misconduct to the entire room. Hallie curled in on herself when she described what she did, she was “devastated” and “let [herself] down.” In her personal reflection, Hallie wrote that she “allowed [herself] to justify dishonesty, rather than…maintaining my academic integrity.” After she finished describing her

academic misconduct in the RJC, she started to cry; she explained that she needed the consequences, and she felt that her consequences were less harsh than she deserved.

Danny recognized more shame from ruining his relationship with his instructor, say that he was "no longer trustworthy." Around half of the students observed engaged in academic misconduct at the end of the semester, and they were unable to repair their relationships or rebuild any lost trust. Danny's reflection stated:

> I regret and am ashamed of both my decisions and actions on actions I made on the project. I asked to be in the *Remediation Program* for a chance to make amends and honor the integrity and ethical standards of [SEU] and affirm my commitment to acting with integrity on future school assignments.

Akhil experienced quite a bit of shame from his academic misconduct, he said, "You lose yourself in all of this." His reflection essay showed his inner turmoil when he wrote:

> Obviously what I was hoping for wouldn't work, it was a case of self-delusion paired with a lapse in judgement but also character….It shows that I'm a unreliable person with no morals and values and that isn't how I was raised.
>
> Sometimes it's not just about academic honesty but who you are deep within. When under pressure will you do the right thing no matter the consequences or will you take the wrong approach, the wrong road, and lie and cheat. Deep down that's what truly matters.

He lost respect socially, lost trust from his peers, and caused his parents to be disappointed in him. The RJC enabled him to feel the full extent of the shame, while focusing on his actions rather than his identity.

Ayla was ashamed that she lost a friend from academic misconduct and caused the entire class to have the testing format altered in a way that made it more difficult and stressful. Fae also had social consequences with her friend for academic misconduct, which she described in her reflection as, "I took advantage of someone I know to make this decision…this outcome means I lost a bit of my friend's trust, and I think it will be a while before can be close again." Both Ayla and Fae discussed their struggles to navigate these social relationships after their misconduct

because they were ashamed that they were responsible for their friends' misconduct and embarrassed that others knew the extent to which they had lost integrity.

Sami had never been in trouble before, so being caught cheating was a shock. During the RJC, she knew how serious it was, and that those "little things catch up to you." She captured this feeling in her reflection:

> Looking back, I still don't understand why I was in a rush. Acting rashly, I made the mistake of thinking that completing the quiz early, with the help of Chegg, would give me more free time during finals. This moment of poor judgment is where I believe I went wrong. This was an assignment I could've easily completed honestly as it was unlimited attempts and tells you what questions you've missed. But I still took it upon myself to use Chegg, thinking just this once it would be okay…I'm disappointed in myself for following the judgment I made.

The personal reflections related strongly to student comments during the RJC, providing a framework for students to discuss newfound knowledge of their actions in relation to academic integrity.

Discussing how families and supporters reacted to learning about academic misconduct – if the students had told them – provided an additional avenue for shaming the decision to cheat. The possibility of disappointment from supporters caused some students to hide the incident. For others, it made them think deeply about their actions. Akhil's father told him that "lying is just not okay," and equated cheating to "arrogance to the passion of learning…[you] dumb yourself down to blindly following." Likewise, Eric's parents were shocked to learn that he had lied to his instructor because it went against what they had taught him as a child, challenging their view of him as "always be[ing] the honest kid." Ayla, Kelsey, and Everett's parents were all disappointed and worried about how cheating would impact their futures. While Sami's parents offered sympathy, Kira's made her promise to "never do it again," and Ren's parents called cheating a poor moral decision.

Interwoven throughout the RJC were opportunities for the Faculty Representative and Peer Educator to explain the harm academic misconduct causes, further shaming the academic misconduct. When the Faculty Representatives shared their experience of handling academic misconduct in their classes and with their students, it showed students the extent to which their actions impacted faculty. Dr. Keyes explained that instructors do not want to report students. He catalogued his personal efforts into making his course fair for all students. Dr. Blue also discussed the heavy time burden faculty face with academic misconduct; he noted that cases take time away that they could be spending time with family or supporting students by developing course materials and offering office hours. Hating that addressing academic misconduct builds an adversarial relationship, Dr. Blue compared academic misconduct to "this spiderweb that continues to go out."

Peer Educators also shamed the students when they shared how they felt when they saw classmates and peers cheating. Leo described it as frustrating because he felt that he must "go the extra mile for something I didn't do." Shelly connected to both the shame from faculty and fellow students. Recognizing that many students receive "validation" from good grades, she challenged the students to think about how unfair it is to watch people that did not earn the grades get the validation. Regardless, for Shelly, "at the end of the day, you're breaking someone's trust."

Personal Accountability

Reflection on their academic misconduct was one moment that students could take personal accountability within an RJC. They already took responsibility by acknowledging academic misconduct in their *Mediation*, and they should have taken responsibility in their reflection essay. In fact, personal accountability was a requirement for successful completion of

the *Remediation Program*. Students who were unable to do so failed out of the program, something that had only happened once since the program's inception.

Students used this as an opportunity to explain what they have done and why they did it. The why was often couched by personal narratives about the expectations from their families, their focus on good grades as validation, and poor time management coupled with the inability to handle the transition from high school to university. Danny, a nontraditional student, recognized that outside influences were prioritized over classes, "not to excuse my actions, but [I] didn't think about class," and then he scrambled to get the assignments turned in on time. Akhil and Ayla both felt pressure from their families to be successful, and they defined success as good grades. Dr. Blue used this as an opportunity to push them on their actions and decision-making, challenging students to review each factor that caused them to engage in academic misconduct as steps they can take differently moving forward.

This approach engaged even those most reluctant to take responsibility. Eric was one such student that initially struggled with accountability. Eric entered an exam late because he had been studying, but he lied to his instructor about why he was late when asked. He did not consider that he had received an unfair advantage of extra time studying, and in his original reflection essay he wrote:

> On the meeting day, I was tired and over it at this point. I had to wake up earlier for this b.s. not knowing what I had done wrong. At the meeting, we had a respectful mediator present, and [the instructor] began to explain her side by mispronouncing my name many times. Trying to avoid any sanction, I kept quiet and let her win. Sometimes you must fake it to make it. She reported me for 'lying' about my reason for being late for her exam when my reason wasn't false but wasn't the full truth.
>
> Apparently, had I told her that I was studying during her exam time, it would have been fine by here, and she acknowledged I didn't cheat but I didn't provide the full truth. But why would a student provide that much context of their business? As long as I didn't cheat, I really should have been a problem. I think she took it personally with this one.

At the RJC, Dr. Nunly confronted Eric about the impact of lying. As a faculty, Dr. Nunly expressed that Eric did not lie a "little bit," but he said that Eric had "straight up lied." Dr. Nunly posited that had he been Eric's instructor, he would have been upset and felt betrayed. This seemed to shock Eric, as if he had not been truly challenged on his academic misconduct prior to the RJC. By the end of the RJC, Eric acknowledged that his actions invalidated his previous efforts in the course, and he directly accepted "the betrayal she felt from me lying." After the RJC, Eric turned in a new reflection, in which he rewrote his description of his violation:

> She reported me for lying about my reason for being late for her exam. I told my professor only half the truth, which is indeed lying. As a kid, I was so honest. Academic violations are so unrecognizable to me, as I've blindly believed I was still as honest as I was when I was younger. This violation truly opened my eyes to how much I've lost my way of telling the truth. Had I told her that I was studying during her exam time and had been honest from the jump, I would not have received a violation.

Although Eric initially had not internalized the moral disruption, the RJC pushed him to remain in moral dissonance and develop his moral decision-making skills.

Another opportunity to take responsibility occurred when students were asked about their previous education on academic integrity. Most students acknowledged that their previous education on it had been perfunctory at best. Rich noted that while cheating was discouraged, there were not real consequences if students were caught while Meg and Tara said that cheating was "frowned upon by not defined." The COVID-19 pandemic also skewed integrity for Sami. She thought that academic misconduct was directly copying before COVID, but today she acknowledged that it is, including tools like GenAI and Chegg. The lines for Sami were blurred because she received adds for Chegg every day, and "[it's] advertised as a study tool but they don't explain [the materials]." Everette agreed that things were changing, and he struggled with understanding what was and was not allowed. Kelsey noted that the only thing that held constant was the idea that "what's your work" was important.

Students often took responsibility by explaining what they wish they had known about academic misconduct before they engaged in it. Sara, Kira, Ayla, Ren, and Eric all wished they had understood who all was impacted by what had appeared to be a small choice, which Danny described as him "neglect[ing] to think about how far reaching it is." Meg said, "It was on me, my problem." Rich simply put it as wishing "not to do it before I did it." All the students observed in RJCs wished they had understood what their choices meant before they chose the wrong path.

Trust and Fairness in Academic Integrity

Broken trust and a lack of fairness were key themes in the RJCS. Nell thought it was unfair that she was in a class with a peer who had also been academically dishonesty, but Nell was caught, but her friend was not. Then, she applied that logic to the rest of the class, and musing that if she had gotten away with it, she wondered if her degree would hold the same value as those who did not cheat.

Samson equated academic integrity to a contract to avoid unfair advantage. Without integrity for yourself at SEU, Samson questioned "the point of being here." He realized that cheating meant there's no way to gauge what a student knows. Samson provided unauthorized assistance to a classmate. "Because I was using my [work] as a reference, we ended up having nearly identical [work]…Professor []'s efforts for Project 3 were neglected…" While Samson had noble intentions to help his friend, the reflection and RJC made him realize that giving his friend the answer was not going to help his friend in the long run, and it was unfair to the professor and other students in the program for him.

Akhil knew that he would never have trust from his instructor because the instructor's first time speaking with the student privately from large lecture was *Mediation*. All that

instructor knew about Akhil was that he cheated. Ayla similarly wrote that her "situation was not fair to the person I reached out to or my professor." At the RJC, Ayla still felt that her instructor "viewed me as untrustworthy."

Ren discussed that trust was needed to have a good relationship with instructors, saying that a good relationship can help students feel more comfortable asking questions without fear. Kira agreed with Ren, calling trust necessary for a relationship where students can be confident to get feedback. Ren recognized that fairness with GenAI was a challenge because "…I understand that other students may take advantage of the function by using it to do things like type work for them, instead of producing their own, original thoughts." Ren navigated intent in the RJC, understanding that even if her actions were unintended to be dishonest, it may still be unfair.

Trust and fairness were key in understanding the harm caused by academic misconduct for students in the RJC. Omar pointed out that it takes away from the work other students put into a class and "discredits" SEU. Samson added that it impacted classmates, SEU, and the professor. Dr. Nunly confirmed that instructors want to have a good relationship with students, because it makes learning more enjoyable. Dr. Velzer explained how trust impacts the way she teaches. When she could not trust her students, the course moved from her "and my students against the material" into an adversarial relationship.

Trust and fairness were a throughline for students in the RJC to connect academic integrity with their future actions. Hallie knew that she must be perceived as trustworthy for her future, because if she could not be trusted to keep information confidential, she would lose clients. As Danny and Kelsey were pursuing careers in accounting, trust was also vital for them to maintain clients. Nell wanted to be a professor, so trust and fairness were considered from

multiple directions: in research, in publishing, and in teaching. Nell's view of integrity became clearer throughout her time dealing with the academic integrity process and programs, she realized that "with more power comes more responsibility." Omar wanted to be a lawyer, and he came to understand that he could not lie in court. Not only was lying possibly perjury, but he could be disbarred for behavior considered unethical. Fae, Ayla, and Sami wanted to work in medicine, and they knew that they needed patients to trust them to be effective medical practitioners.

Another aspect of the RJC that unsettled students occurred when they were asked their integrity expectations of others. Every student that went through an RJC expected other people to have the skills they claim with their credentials. They expected their pilot to land a plane and doctors to treat their patients. They believed that their electricians knew how to wire buildings without starting fires, and they drove over bridges because they had faith those bridges were built by people with the skills to design and implement appropriate structures. According to Fae, this aspect of trust for others is the same, no matter how large or small the task. The trust in others was so pervasive that Rich "doesn't even think about it." When Dr. Nunly asked the students in his RJC how they felt if they learned that their professor cheated, students stopped. Eric had "never thought about it like that," and Sara wondered how they could possibly teach students if they had cheated. Shelly pointed out that even if a faculty member did everything 90% right, they still lied for 10%. Lies snowball. This prompt forced students to take a longer perspective of academic misconduct and the skills they were building as students that will apply regardless of their profession.

Support as the Key Moral Disrupter

When students took responsibility during the RJC, Faculty Representatives and Peer Educators provided support for them to learn and grow from the experience. For some students, the shaming and support began far before the RJC, during their *Mediation*. After the *Mediation* and completing the online module and reflection essay, students could choose an RJC or an individual meeting with a facilitator from the AIO. Avery attended one such individual restorative justice meeting, which she found to be the most beneficial part of the *Remediation Program* because of the nature of the reintegrative shaming. The facilitator responsible for Avery's restorative justice meeting opened Avery's eyes to her conduct, and helped her navigate through her anger, frustration, and confusion:

> She understood me the most and, um, you know, like taught me again, like, some life principles, how I can apply it outside of college and to my career. She related to me. She asked me, she got to know me on a personal level. She was very comforting. She understood my frustration.

Individual restorative justice meetings were only offered in rare circumstances, and the AIO preferred students to attend RJCs.

The group nature of an RJC was integral to building the foundation of support. Graham found solace in the group reflection:

> Well, just because…talking about yourself and your mistakes is…a very hard thing to do in general. And I think…sharing it wish other students is, it's kind of a miserable thing to do, even though they've done it too, they made a mistake as well. Yeah, that's just kind of a tough, that was a tough thing for me personally.

Palmer also found that the RJCs made her "feel less alone." She was also uplifted by the group acknowledging

> 'It's Okay. This doesn't defined you.' Or 'It's not going to make or break your career.' But they were also making sure to tell us like 'This is important.' Or 'It shouldn't be like overlooked' and that we should learn from this. But I liked how supportive they were."

RJCs provided a unique framework for support in these students because not only was there someone responsible for facilitating that support through the discussion, but faculty representatives and peer educators were able to provide the support throughout the discussion as well.

During the RJC, support was offered by both the faculty representatives and the peer educators. Peer educators like Shelly often emphasized their understanding of the students' stressors and anxieties by sharing personal stories. For example, Shelly affirmed that it was normal to be afraid to reach out to instructors before sharing how she built skills to feel comfortable reaching out. Leo assured students that asking them the factors around their misconduct was not to make them feel bad, but to help them explore pain points in their life and how they can address those problems if they happen again in the future.

In another example, Shelly shared that she had been severely ill during one semester, just like Fae. However, Shelly was connected to more campus resources, so she was aware of her support options. Dr. Keyes was empathetic to students' personal challenges, and he explained that most cheating in his experience is situational, not premeditated. He knew that students were not bad people, instead he shared the most common student challenge is with time management and how large class sizes made it harder to build support systems or approach faculty.

Faculty representatives often looked at the larger picture for students' futures. Dr. Keyes brought up that the consequences for breaches of integrity as an adult professional are more severe than academic misconduct in college, so while it was "not good that you're here…mistakes now are safer." This is an important facet of support that often turned the students who were more resistant to disruptions to their moral schema around. Everett, for example, called his misconduct an "honest mistake." Eric also identified that the remediation

process helped him realize that people that cheated may not be bad people; they could be "good kids that made mistakes." The idea that mistakes, no matter how intentional, had consequences, and those consequences were an opportunity to move forward orients the students towards a future orientation and provided them with a locus of control.

Dr. Blue encouraged students to let faculty be a part of their support structures when he explained that instructors are mostly understanding, and they did not want cheating to be the last resort. Dr. Blue knew the temptation to cheating was strong, but he encouraged students to reflect on their sense of self. Dr. Nunly also encouraged students to think about who they wanted to be and work towards being that person. "This event doesn't define you," said Dr. Nunly in one RJC, "…you're lucky to spend the time reflecting." Each Faculty Representative labelled the academic integrity process as a great learning opportunity.

The elicitation exercise at the end of an RJC provided two points of support: it allowed students an additional opportunity to for self-reevaluation, and it reinforced student reintegration into the SEU community with opportunities of self-liberation. Students were asked to take several minutes to write down what skills they wished to cultivate. In her elicitation, Meg wrote that she needed to "expand my understanding of the resources that [SEU] provides for its students." Whereas Tara narrowed her elicitation to develop "test taking strategies." The elicitation led to the development of PLOs, which the students would complete on their own, outside of the RJC.

Leaving an RJC

By the end of an RJC, students had transitioned from nervous to calm, the anxious foot jingling and pen tapping absent. One by one, they turned in their elicitation activities and proposals for their PLOs to the facilitator, Juan. Juan confirmed their deadlines before letting the

students pack up and walk out of the conference room. With heads held high, the students turned right out of the room and exited the building shortly thereafter. They made it through the RJC, and they were ready to move forward.

Personal Learning Objectives

After the RJC, students must complete their PLOs before they were considered remediated. Students developed these PLOs in the RJC from the elicitation activity, and the PLOs were the primary driver of self-liberation. Using the elicitation activity, the students explored how they could develop the skills in areas they had identified as opportunities for growth. For example, Rich felt that he needed help with "being confident in my own integrity, which I have felt less confident in since the incident." Rich developed three PLOs: two involved reflective writing on Dr. Brene Brown's "Listening to Shame" and "Anatomy of Trust" TedTalks, and the third was the completion of a five-hour online course titled "Developing Good Academic Practice." In his reflections, Rich wrote that, "I know now that I should not be ashamed of who I am. Of what I did, disappointed, but eager to learn from my mistakes and move forward as a better person because of my experiences."

Ayla found it difficult to move past shame in the RJC, and her PLOs reflected this struggle. She completed one reflection on forgiveness, noting that she needed to work on forgiving herself. Most poignant, however, was her reflection on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichi's "The Danger of a Single Story." Ayla seems to have found peace, as she wrote, "What I am going through now is just a part of my story and does not make me who I am."

Avery's PLOs also helped her navigate and resolve her feelings about her case and academic misconduct. It was through the module and her meeting that she learned about SEU's student success website, and the services they offer. She found it helpful for her life as a whole

person, not just a student that had been reported for academic misconduct because "It was more about how I can improve in the future. How I can apply what I learned from the PLOs…we both picked out together."

Hallie described her struggles with time management and writing in her elicitation exercise, and her PLOs required her to engage with SEU modules on time management and writing. Her reflection describes her self-assessment for time management as poor, she "got a 30 out of 50" which caused her adjust her schedule; she now studies in the student center on campus twice a week to limit distractions. Ayla also completed the time management module, scoring a 25/50 for her self-assessment. She downloaded an app called "Studios" to help her "organize your classes on your phone."

From practical skills to help students be better students to final opportunities for self-reevaluation, the PLOs provided students with the space they need to determine what would be most beneficial – thus most morally disruptive – to choosing academic integrity in the future. Because Transformers completed all of the steps of the *Remediation Program*, they were the only students whose moral disruption was sufficient enough to sustain changes in their moral decision-making skills.

Transformers: Morally Changed

The experience of the full *Remediation Program* pushed this group of students from Active Engagers to Transformers. They each have transformed some way that they approach academic work, and they view the experience as necessary for their growth into the students, and people, they are.

> I think, honestly. Obviously, I regret cheating, but I don't regret the things that I've learned from it because obviously every mistake, every issue you deal with is the…it's a teaching moment for you. Yea, I mean, I…I'd say it was a good experience because it taught me a lot about myself as a student. (Graham)

> It definitely helped me reflect on my past, present, and future. I applied the concept of integrity and respect and honesty to my like outside of school and my future in my career. Yeah, the overall program taught me a lot of different aspects about not just honesty, but integrity and, um, being true to yourself, being honesty with other people. And the concept of writing your own story, I guess, and how other people can perceive you based on what you tell them. (Avery)

Transformers viewed the academic integrity process as necessary to their personal growth, and they even went further. They describe the academic integrity process, including the *Remediation Program*, positively.

Palmer, for example, called her experience "…uplifting and helpful and they were very supportive. So, there's nothing, like, scary about it. You shouldn't I guess like be scared, like it's okay." All of the students acknowledged utilization of SEU resources and being examples of integrity for their peers. Palmer predicted that

> I think even subconsciously they're gonna be more careful about their work because I find myself being like that. And…I think, well, for me, if something comes up, like they're going to tell their peers about it and their classmates and how they should also be like be careful and…probably other people that go through the program will help their peers too.

Students who completed the *Remediation Program* were most assertive in their perception that they would remain academically honest moving forward.

Transformers engaged in the academic integrity process in many ways, both begrudgingly and openly. The totality of their experiences forced them to reflect on who they were becoming as people. It made them uncomfortable, and it forced them to confront unpleasant thoughts and feelings. This helped them to link academic conduct to their futures, and to realize that previous behavior was not in line with how they wished to view themselves or envision their futures. In other words, the self-reevaluation and self-liberation enabled them to change their habits.

Conclusions

Students experience varying degrees of moral disruption during the academic integrity process and the *Remediation Program* at SEU. These disruptions occur when students receive notice that they have been accused of academic misconduct, during their *Mediation*, while completing the academic integrity module and writing their reflection essays, in the course of their RJC, and completing their PLOs. The longer a student engages with the AIO, the longer they remain in moral dissonance, enabling the growth of their moral decision-making. It is unclear how far such dissonance pushes students through the four components of moral decision-making (Moral Awareness, Moral Judgement, Moral Motivation, and Moral Action). Students at SEU are self-reporting high rates of cheating behaviors at high rates, including those with academic misconduct records, but only two percent of the student body are reported for academic misconduct on average. Fewer still engage in the *Remediation Program* and complete it. As indicated above, those who complete the full program show the most potential for having the ability to act on their moral decision-making process. They report their experiences as transformative. Active Engagers are on the cusp, but they lack the final steps of the *Remediation Program*, those which engage reintegrative shaming to hold students in moral dissonance, the RJC and PLOs. The results provide additional information for the theoretical framework, with the student archetypes presented in *Figure 5.1*.

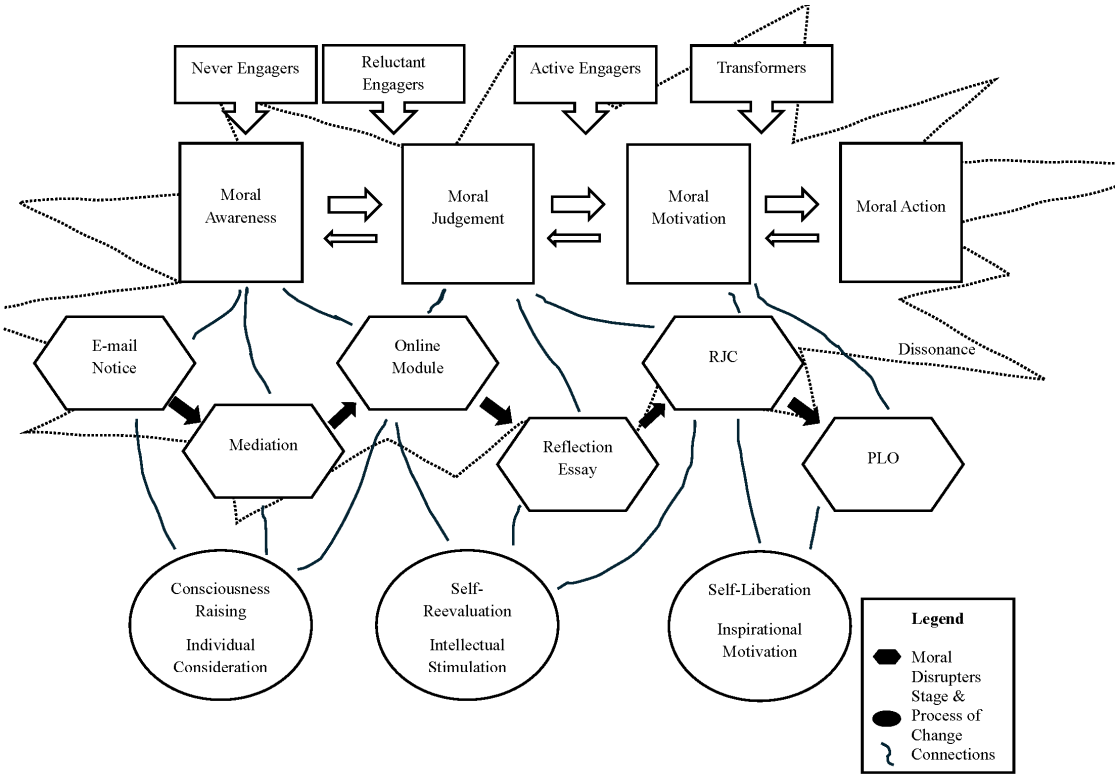

Figure 5.1 Adapted MTC Model Results for Restorative Justice-Based AI Programs

Without a clearer sample of different student groups—students without a record, students with a record that fail to attempt remediation, students with a record that fail to complete remediation, and students with a record that complete remediation—and a more in-depth analysis of all parts of the academic integrity process, the only conclusions that can be made are that moral disruption takes place throughout the academic integrity process. These disruptions may lead students to be morally motivated to maintain academic integrity, but without adequate data or follow up, piece that remains missing to understand if the academic integrity process and *Remediation Program* can help students progress from moral motivation and moral action, remaining academically honest throughout the rest of their academic careers.

The results show that the academic integrity process, and the *Remediation Program* in particular, impact student moral decision-making. Reintegrative shaming is a core reason these changes took place, and they support the pursuance of restorative justice practices in resolving academic misconduct cases at higher education institutions.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Because academic conduct is related to future conduct in the workplace, higher education institutions are responsible for developing students who are as capable in the field as their degree proclaims and adhere to established ethical practices. To provide a proportional response to academic misconduct that is both educational and fair, restorative justice practices have been raised as a promising avenue to consider. Restorative justice practices have proven successful in non-academic misconduct cases (Karp & Frank, 2016; Karp & Sacks, 2014). Although the application of restorative justice practices is arguably promising within academic misconduct cases, they have not been studied within the context of higher education. In this dissertation, I set out to understand the relationship between one restorative justice-based *Remediation Program*, student moral decision-making, and recidivism. Further, I hoped to uncover *how* restorative justice practices impact student perceptions of academic integrity after students receive an infraction.

Neumeister (2017) provided the theoretical framework from which the present study is situated. According to Neumeister, to create change in student moral decision-making and help students become moral actors, moral dissonance—prolonged moral disruption—must be effectively harnessed. By using quantitative and qualitative methods, we can begin to understand that when restorative practices are implemented effectively and with the appropriate reintegrative shaming, they have the capacity to provide enough dissonance to help students move through three of the four stages of moral decision making: moral awareness, moral judgement, and moral

motivation. Moral action, where a student makes the ethically correct decision and acts on it every time, is likely one step beyond the capacity. However, while not fully achieving moral action, such practices and programming lay the foundation for those moral decisions and support an increase in moral decisions.

There are several points within SEU's academic integrity process that offer an opportunity to disrupt student moral schema. Evidence from the present study suggests that going through the academic integrity process does not stop students from engaging in future misconduct, though it does reduce the amount of academic misconduct and change the type. The academic integrity process itself may cause disequilibrium, but if that disruption is not strong enough or is limited to only one part of the disruption, then it would make sense that students are unable to go from Moral Awareness to Moral Action. In addition, the disruptions were often tied to negative emotions from students. Without assistance navigating through these emotions, the disruption could backfire and lead students to think they needed to be smarter about their misconduct rather than not engaging in cheating behaviors.

Theory in Practice

Restorative justice practices are integral in the Model of Transformational Change (MTC) because it is "…ideally suited to increase the moral judgment and moral discernment of students in the contemplative stage. At this stage, the goal of interventions should be to provoke intellectual stimulation as a means of promoting self-reevaluation" (Neumeister, 2017, p.105). These disrupters and dissonance are possible during several parts of the academic integrity process.

The first opportunity for dissonance or moral disruption—where a student is in a state of decisional unbalance (Neumeister, 2017)—takes place when students received notice that they

were accused of academic misconduct. Interviewed students discussed the shock of seeing the notice, even if they were aware of academic misconduct or their behavior was egregious. The period of time between the notice and *Mediation* was filled with anxiety and stress. For some students, this was beneficial, as they needed to sit with the allegation. For others, this was needlessly stress-inducing, and it built defensiveness and mistrust because they claimed not to know what they had done was academic misconduct when they engaged in the behavior. Regardless, the notice at least brought awareness to students that academic misconduct may be an amoral exercise because they associated being brought to the Academic Integrity Office (AIO) with being in trouble. Neumeister (2017) labels such change as short-lived, arguing that "getting caught is not sufficient to produce sustained, meaningful changes" (p. 103). Thus, while the notice of a violation may start the moral disruption, it seems insufficient to bring lasting change.

The mediated discussion between the instructor and student(s) offers a more adaptive moral disrupter, though it is much more complex. By keeping students in a sustained state of dissonance and individual consideration, the *Mediation* has the potential to bring greater change in the moral schema used for moral decision-making (Neumeister, 2017). In addition, the *Mediation* offers what Neumeister calls the student's readiness to change, or their openness to recognizing their conduct was wrong and that they need to make better decisions moving forward.

However, the *Mediation* may be more fraught with challenges as a disrupter because it involves the interactions of multiple people. I argue that while restorative justice practices offer the best solution for promoting this readiness to change, reintegrative shaming must be appropriately integrated into the process for the student to build their moral sensitivity. For

example, students' embarrassment often played a key role in their behavior walking into the *Mediation*. They are concerned with everyone they see labelling them as a cheater. From the moment the student walks into the building, there are opportunities to successfully utilize reintegrative shaming, but the mark can and—at times—does fall short. For the students undergoing the process, it can help humanize their faculty or it can further demonize them. For example, when instructors have a poor relationship with their students going into a *Mediation*, students react defensively, feeling attacked, rather than engaging in open dialogue in the process. The feelings of shame are unable to be resolved in such instances.

Faculty who expressed empathy and support for students, even when holding them accountable, helped students overcome the shame and embarrassment of the allegation because they embraced the parameters of restorative justice (Strickland, 2004; Zehr, 1990). Meanwhile, faculty that were perceived as malicious by the students brought only resentment. Further, the mediator could be perceived as either a hinderance or a balm of support. Some student participants felt that having a mediated discussion with a mediator was going overboard, and some felt that the mediator did not do anything. These students were less likely to feel that the overall process was fair, whereas the students that believed the mediator was there to assist reported that for an unpleasant process, it was about as good as it could be. For these students, they were able to "recognize and engage with their own ambivalence toward their behavior" (Neumeister, 2017, p. 104). Students that related overall positive experiences with the *Mediation* were more deeply reflective of their conduct and how they could avoid academic misconduct moving forward.

Not every student completes the *Remediation Program*. As such, the initial notice and *Mediation* may be the only opportunity for the AIO to cause a moral disruption for students.

Depending on how the *Mediation* plays out, it may push students from moral awareness to moral judgement, where they know that academic misconduct is wrong, and they start to think about what options aside from misconduct may be, if for no other reason than not wanting to repeat the *Mediation* process again in the future. For students who do complete the *Remediation Program*, there are several further opportunities for moral disruption: the online module and reflection, the Restorative Justice Conference (RJC), and the Personal Learning Objectives (PLOs). This is done through intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation (Neumeister, 2017).

As a part of the online academic integrity module, students are exposed to other types of academic misconduct and sanctions, based on real cases adjudicated by the AIO. These different examples provide students with the opportunity to think about their cases and how it may or may not relate to the examples. Intellectually, it provides a challenge to previous beliefs by helping students empathize with students that have committed academic misconduct, thereby empathizing with themselves, while also providing them with resources and options to abort before engaging in academic misconduct again. When this is coupled with the student's personal reflection, it provides a great avenue for moral disruption. Students must think critically about the steps that lead up to their academic misconduct and what active steps they can take to avoid it moving forward, what Neumeister (2017) calls "self-reevaluation." Students that complete this portion of the *Remediation Program* should move more fluidly within the moral judgement stage of moral decision making when it comes to academic integrity.

The primary driver of moral dissonance in the *Remediation Program* is the RJC. This process brings together embarrassment and shame from being in the room with other "cheaters" to building back a sense of community. It is during the RJC that students "(a) recognize how their behavior harmed other people and the community; (b) identify ways to repair those harms;

and (c) integrate themselves back into the community by fulfilling those obligations" (Neumeister, 2017, p. 105). The facilitator in the RJC was less impactful than the Faculty Representative and Peer Educator, though they are helpful in building trust by setting ground rules and engaging the parties in constructive dialogue. Faculty challenge the students to expand their perception of academic misconduct while also providing mentor moments, where they build students back up and assure them that an incident of academic misconduct does not define them. Similarly, Peer Educators empathize with the pressures of being a student while also describing the impacts academic misconduct has on them as a student that has not cheated. The combination of reflection and future-oriented discussion is a major source of moral disruption, meeting the needs for intellectual stimulation for critical self-reevaluation and inspiration for self-liberation that enables students may move from moral judgment into moral motivation (Neumeister, 2017).

The final opportunity for moral disruption may take place during a student's PLOs. Because the PLOs vary so widely and are based on a student's unique needs, some are less disruptive than others, but they all provide opportunities for students to self-liberate (Neumeister, 2017). For example, some students need to work on time management skills, so they complete an online module. This is not morally disruptive, though it may support a student's moral motivation by giving them the freedom to set a schedule that promotes academic success and practice skills that support academic integrity. However, some students continue reflective work by engaging with topics centered on shame, forgiveness, or ethics in practice. These students have an opportunity to solidify their moral decision-making skills. Some may end up at moral action, though others may remain at moral motivation.

Interviews with students and observations of RJCs support the idea that restorative practices in the academic integrity process at SEU provide opportunities for moral disequilibrium

that can help students move through the four components of moral decision-making. These insights show that shame can be effective in causing disequilibrium, but shame without support does not lead to change.

Shaming Only Works with Support

Each step in SEU's academic integrity process often begins with students feeling a strong emotion, most often shame, embarrassment, anger, and anxiety. At each stage in the process, the AIO has an opportunity to engage with those students to answer those strong emotions with support. In restorative justice, reintegrative shaming is key to lasting change (Johnstone, 2002; Strickland, 2004; Zehr, 1990). For Zehr (1990),

> Offenders expressed an increased awareness of victims as people and attitudinal change was measurable in some cases. Nevertheless, they found the experience difficult and talked of it as being a tough punishment. Often offenders listed meeting the victim as both the best and the worst part of the process. (p. 165)

This is challenging for students, and it has the capacity to cause great moral disruption. However, without the reintegrative part of reintegrative shaming, no progress can be made. During a *Mediation*, reintegration happens when the faculty expresses support for the student as a whole person while still holding them accountable for their actions. Students needed to feel as though their behavior was bad, but that did not mean they were bad people; "…reintegrative shaming builds ties between and among the affected parties and may be potentially restorative for all" (Strickland, 2004, p. 127).

The RJCs are another key time for reintegrative shaming. The conferences recognize this: "Offenders too need healing. They must be accountable for their behavior, of course. They cannot be 'let off the hook.' Yet this accountability can itself be a step toward change and

healing" (Zehr, 1990, p. 188). There is opportunity to uplift students that have engaged in academic misconduct during the RJC, it recognizes that the students remain a part of the university community. A RJC offers reintegrative shaming because it provides:

> Condemnation of their behaviours as unacceptable to the community, will be mixed with empathy for them as members of the community who have erred. At the same time, it will be made clear that the circumstances which might mitigate their guilt do not excuse their actions and, crucially, do not remove their liability to make amends for the harm they have caused. (Johnstone, 2002, p. 93)

Without the reintegration, shame and anger can easily turn towards resentment. Students that do not receive the uplift with the shame are left to reconcile their self-image, and they focus on themselves rather than the community. This puts them at risk for regressing after their moral disruption, rather than progressing to higher order moral decision-making skills.

Moving the Needle

The results from the survey show that students who undergo the academic integrity process are not less likely to engage in academic misconduct. That does not mean the academic integrity process or *Remediation Program* are ineffective. For students to reach moral action, more moral disruption must take place. From the data, there is some evidence to suggest a difference between students who have a violation on file with the AIO. Those students with a record are also likely to engage in academic misconduct less times on average when compared to students with no academic misconduct record. This suggests that students do undergo some moral disruption and changes upon engaging with the AIO.

Through this study, it is clear that restorative justice-based practices in the academic misconduct process have the potential to alter moral decision-making processes because they provide are opportunities for dissonance to alter student perceptions around moral decisions. Restorative practices throughout the entire academic integrity process alter students self-reported

rates cheating behavior and decrease student's belief they would commit academic misconduct in the future. While some research questions were answered, others remain.

Future Directions

There are many potential avenues for further research. Studying reintegrative shaming as the mechanism for moral disruption is one such direction. Reintegrative shaming should be studied qualitatively within the context of *Mediations*. Observations of *Mediations* and interviews with faculty, students, and mediators would be useful for understanding the impact of *Mediations*. This may provide insight on the types of verbal and nonverbal language used by instructors and mediators to ensure reintegration is happening effectively in *Mediations*.

A large-scale survey would also be of great interest. It was deeply disappointing that some analysis could not be conducted with the response rate to the survey in the present study. With greater incentives for more participants, better insights into the differences between student groups that have a violation on file and those that do not could be interrogated. In addition, greater participation from students that have completed educational programs are crucial to understanding the opportunities for moral disruption between those who avoid the program, those who participate in the program, and those who complete the program.

Furthermore, an experiment could be conducted with students who wish to engage in the *Remediation Program*, without limiting the student ability to participate in the program. For example, a six-week delay in the program would enable researchers to design a pre-test/post-test study with three groups of interest: students who would never enroll in the program, students motivated to enroll in the program, and students who complete the program. All three groups could receive the pre-test before after a *Mediation*. The post-test would be administered to students who were not interested in the *Remediation Program* and the students who were

interested but delayed in starting six weeks after the *Mediation*. The third group, students who finished the *Remediation Program*, could complete the post-test upon completion of the program. Using a modified moral decision-making measure could help capture any shifts to moral decision-making that are the result of the *Remediation Program*. This would also identify some of the differences between students who are motivated to attempt the program, and those who are not.

While the present study engaged in one academic misconduct *Remediation Program*, there are other institutions that engage in *Remediation Program*s rooted in restorative justice-based practices. Expanding the present study to encapsulate more of these programs as a multi-case study would assist in determining the transferability and generalizability of restorative justice-based practices in *Remediation Program*s. Although this study is limited by its scope, it still offers several implications for policy, practice, and theory.

Implications

The advent of GenAI and the COVID-19 pandemic brought a spotlight to academic integrity in the university setting (e.g., Dehouche, 2021; Newton & Essex, 2023; Yusuf et al., 2024). There are currently two considerations for institutions: the validity of assessment (Corbin et al., 2025; Dawson et al., 2024) and the structure of academic integrity policies, which are typically outdated (Cullen & Murphy, 2025). While some states have begun to fight academic misconduct (Newton, 2025), it is up to individual institutions to develop a process for handling cases of alleged academic misconduct that both meets due process requirements while also pivoting away from purely punitive measures and towards a teaching and learning approach (Cullen, 2022).

Academic integrity policies should be updated, and approaches centered on restorative justice practices offer an opportunity for institutions to develop students moral decision-making capabilities, reducing recidivism and giving students the opportunity to effectively reintegrate into the university community by taking ownership for their actions and developing a plan for change. Institutions should consider an alternative dispute resolution module for alleged misconduct that allows for a *Mediation* process similar to Howard Zehr's (1990) Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP). In addition, after a violation has been acknowledged, after violation education through a RJC that brings together students that have acknowledged academic misconduct with community representatives of faculty and other students should be integrated into academic integrity policies.

Policy change takes time, but procedural changes within existing policies may be implemented quickly without structural changes. Academic integrity practitioners must look at the practices and procedures that operationalize their policies to find opportunities for students to encounter restorative justice-based practices. If a conduct officer is responsible for adjudicating alleged academic misconduct, consider imbedding restorative practices through motivational interviews and opportunities for students to choose their path through the academic conduct process (Ashley & Miller, 2022; Karp & Sacks, 2014). When policies rely on court-like processes, such as those common in Honor Code institutions (Cullen & Murphy, 2025), academic integrity practitioners should focus on training involved students and faculty on reintegrative shaming (Johnstone, 2002; Strickland, 2004). Such training should be for faculty in policies that allow for *Mediations* or faculty-student meetings to resolve alleged academic misconduct. Shame without support discourages moral decision-making growth, as evidenced by this project. Without the support and empathy to reintegrate students into the community,

students view processes as unfair, results as untrustworthy, and themselves as lacking. Reintegrative shaming offers a path for students to take ownership of previous decisions while providing an avenue to do better in the future.

Neumeister's (2017) Model of Transformative Change is directly applicable to academic integrity policies and procedures. As institutions look to update their policies or reinvigorate existing procedures, creating opportunities for moral disrupters within the process should be front of mind. Prolonging the dissonance offers an avenue for more lasting changes to student moral decision-making processes. Institutions and academic integrity practitioners should focus on how they can help students work from moral awareness to moral action by engaging the students in moral disruption via the reintegrative shaming that occurs through individual consideration, intellectual simulation, and inspirational motivation. This is something SEU did well but could still improve by encouraging more students to complete the *Remediation Program*, prolonging the dissonance for students engaged in the academic integrity process.

Recommendations

For SEU and any other institution looking to implement restorative practices in their academic integrity process, there are several areas of opportunity for growth. The first opportunity is during any formal *Mediation* or confrontation regarding alleged academic misconduct. Faculty that are engaging in these processes should receive training on conflict management and navigating difficult conversations. Instructors are allowed to express anger and disappointment as a part of holding students accountable. However, these emotions need to be tempered with opportunities for the student to reintegrate into the classroom and university community.

Within the *Remediation Program* at SEU, there are currently several points that could be reducing the program's impact. The first is student enrollment. Several interviewed students could not remember the program being discussed or offered. While they acknowledged that it may have been discussed, they were often overwhelmed by the entire academic integrity process and were not in a place to listen after any agreement had been made. Furthermore, students confirmed that they do not read the emails sent to them after the violation. There are a couple of options to address this. SEU could automatically enroll students in the *Remediation Program* upon case closure. This may increase some initial engagement, as students will see the online module in the learning management system. However, much of the *Remediation Program* is administered via e-mail, and students may not read through enrollment.

Another suggestion is that the AIO administer exit interviews for students after a *Mediation*. This could be conducted via Zoom, but scheduling a 5–10-minute meeting with students to check in on them after the *Mediation* may also provide connection with community and uplift in addition to providing information about the *Remediation Program*. Even a text nudge allowing students to choose to engage. Such nudges are linked to retention and student success, and they could increase participation in the *Remediation Program*, particularly if the AIO sent the text from a highly trusted source or engaged in material that is timely and relevant to this group of students (Page et al., 2025). Greater incentives for program completion is a final suggestion to generate enrollment, especially for those students who do not see the need for record restriction. For example, if students could redo an assignment for partial credit instead of receiving a 0 on an assignment if they complete the *Remediation Program*, it may lead to greater uptick. This, however, could be a challenge, as the guidelines surrounding sanctions are based on the instructor in the course. The AIO may consider partnering with high report courses and

departments to see if the instructors would be willing to offer a reduced sanction for completion of the *Remediation Program*.

The time between the online academic integrity module/reflection essay and the RJC is another pain point. Students forget that they have not yet completed the *Remediation Program*, because they have done the online portions. A monthly email or text nudge prompting students that have not yet completed an RJC with the upcoming RJCs sign up may help students sign up for a meeting. Students, again, may fail to read the emails, but they may see the subject line or click on a link if it is noteworthy. Because the RJC offers one of the most significant opportunities for moral disruption, the *Remediation Program* should consider all available options to help students reach this program milestone.

Conclusion

Moral disruptors did not guarantee that students would reach the stage of moral decision-making to choose moral action after going through the academic integrity process at SEU. However, it provides the opportunity for such disruption to lead to change. Each step of the academic integrity process can act as a moral disruptor if reintegrative shaming was appropriately supplied. Shame without support and reintegration would likely reduce moral dissonance, having a negative effect on moral decision-making. When students were able to feel shame for their decisions but reduce the shame felt towards their persons via reintegration into the university community, they could remain in moral dissonance long enough to develop their moral decision-making. By prolonging moral dissonance through the *Remediation Program*, there was potential for long term change.

Though nearly all students self-report engaging in academic misconduct with some frequency, institutions should not throw out opportunities for moral growth when students are

reported for academic misconduct. There are chances for the institution to increase moral decision-making by implementing restorative justice-based practices. These changes can reduce the frequency with which students engage in academic misconduct, even if it does not eliminate it entirely. Restorative justice could help achieve this moral disruption when it effectively utilizes reintegrative shaming to shame the cheating behavior while reintegrating the student into the university community.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: OBSERVATION FIELD NOTES

	Student A	Student B	Student C	Other Observations
Disruption to Moral Schema				
Justification				
Acceptance				
Personal Responsibility				
Response to Reintegrative Shaming				
Other Observations				

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introductory Statement

Good [time of day]. Thank you for being here and sharing your thoughts and perceptions about the *Remediation Program* through the Office of Academic Honesty. I have a few notes before we start. First, remember that you may change your mind about participating in this interview, and you are allowed to not answer any question that I ask. If you feel more comfortable with your camera off, that is fine. All I ask is that if you choose to answer a question, you answer it honestly. Second, my contact information is at the bottom of your consent form. If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact me. Finally, your consent form shows that you agreed to the full audio recording of this [Zoom] interview, is that still the case? Do you have any questions for me or about the topic before we get started?

Background Information

- When did you start at [institution]?
- How long have you been in your major?
- Can you tell me about your plans after graduation?
    - (Probing: Do you plan to attend graduate/professional school? Do you have a job/internship you have or plan to apply to?)

***Remediation Program* Information**

- Can you tell me a little bit about why you participated in the *Remediation Program*? How did/didn't the program meet your expectations?
- What do you remember most from the program?
- Has the program impacted the way you approach course work?
    - If so, how? If not, why?
    - (Probing: What was that like for you?)
- Has the program impacted the way you use university resources and services?
    - If so, how? If not, why?
- Did the program help you succeed in your goals?
    - Why or why not?
    - Can you give me an example?

Questions based on McCabe Responses

If cheated again after going through the program:

- Can you tell me a little more about your response here?
- What made you engage in these behaviors?
- Were you caught? If so, how was the situation resolved? If not, why do you think you got away with it?

If did not cheat again:

- Can you tell me about your responses to this survey?
- What changed your mind about engaging in these behaviors?

Concluding

- What else do you think I should know about the program?
- Can you describe any long-term effects cheating might have for students?
- Is there anything else you wanted to bring up that we didn't discuss earlier?

APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Brief Description

The purpose of this research is to investigate students' behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs about academic integrity. Individuals who volunteer to participate in this study will take an online survey that asks multiple choice questions about their experiences and attitudes relating to school and schoolwork. It will take about 15 minutes of your time. The risks to participants in this study are no greater than those you encounter in everyday life but may include discomfort about answering questions about your behavior. Please read the remainder of this form before deciding if you want to volunteer to be in this research study.

My name is Courtney Cullen. I am a doctoral student at the Louise McBee Institute of Higher Education, and I am seeking your consent to participate in this research study. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so you may choose to participate or not. The information below explains the study in detail. Before volunteering, please ask any questions that you may have about the research; I will be happy to explain anything in greater detail. My email address is court13@uga.edu.

Details of Participant Involvement

I am interested in learning more about how students make decisions regarding academic integrity. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take an online survey that asks multiple choice questions about your experiences and attitudes relating to school and schoolwork. You will be asked questions about how you have completed assignments and how you feel about academics at your school.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All information about participants will be anonymous and will not be shared with faculty or university administrators. This means that your identifiable information will be protected and will not appear in any reports of this research. I will be able to associate you with your data, but no other individual will have access to this information. Your individual data will never be shared. Five years after the publication of our results, I will destroy all participant data.

Risks and Benefits of Participation

The risks to you for participating in this study may include slight discomfort at being asked about your behavior and beliefs about school. These risks will be minimized by making sure that we keep your data completely private. You can also skip any questions you prefer not to answer. If you should experience any difficulties during the study, please stop, and email court13@uga.edu so that I can help you. You will be able to complete the survey at a later time, if you wish.

The benefit of this research is that it may contribute to better general understanding of academic integrity and help colleges and universities engage with students in authentic learning.

Participant Rights

You have the right to ask any questions you have before, during, or after participation, and I encourage you to do so. If you do not want to be in this study, there will be no penalties or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you volunteer to be in this study and later change your mind, you have the right to withdraw. You may withdraw by closing your browser window. If

you would like to ensure that your data are erased, click the "withdraw from the study" link at the end of the survey.
As a voluntary participant in this research, you have the right to refuse to perform any activities and answer any questions that I ask of you. This research has been approved by the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, a committee responsible for ensuring that the safety and rights of research participants are protected.

Contact Information
For more information about this research before, during, or after your participation, please contact me at court13@uga.edu.

Before continuing, please email me any questions you have about participation in this study.

Ethics Position Questionnaire

Please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

- People should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree.
- Risks to another should never be tolerated, irrespective of how small the risks might be.
- The existence of potential harm to others is always wrong, irrespective of the benefits to be gained.
- One should never psychologically or physically harm another person.
- One should not perform an action which might in any way threaten the dignity and welfare of another individual.
- If an action could harm an innocent other, then it should not be done.
- Deciding whether or not to perform an act by balancing the positive consequences of the act against the negative consequences of the act is immoral.
- The dignity and welfare of the people should be the most important concern in any society.
- It is never necessary to sacrifice the welfare of others.
- Moral behaviors are actions that closely match ideals of the most "perfect" action.
- There are no ethical principles that are so important that they should be a part of any code of ethics.
- What is ethical varies from one situation and society to another.
- Moral standards should be seen as being individualistic; what one person considers to be moral may be judged to be immoral by another person
- Different types of morality cannot be compared as to "rightness."
- Questions of what is ethical for everyone can never be resolved since what is moral or immoral is up to the individual.
- Moral standards are simply personal rules that indicate how a person should behave, and are not be be applied in making judgments of others.

- Ethical considerations in interpersonal relations are so complex that individuals should be allowed to formulate their own individual codes.
- Rigidly codifying an ethical position that prevents certain types of actions could stand in the way of better human relations and adjustment.
- No rule concerning lying can be formulated; whether a lie is permissible or not permissible totally depends upon the situation.
- Whether a lie is judged to be moral or immoral depends upon the circumstances surrounding the action.

Defining Issues Test (DIT) – Adapted from Heinz and the Drug scenario.

The purpose of this section is to help us understand how people think about social problems. Different people have different opinions about questions of right and wrong. There are no "right" answers to such problems in the way that math problems have right answers. Please read the following scenario and then answer the questions that follow.

In a senior course required for graduation, a student named Heinz is on the verge of passing. Heinz had a rough semester—their grandparent passed away just before the semester, their father recently lost his job, and Heinz has had to increase his hours at his part-time job in order to pay his rent and for food. There is one final assignment that the student needs to receive a high grade to pass the course and graduate. The student has no way to finance the course in the future if they do not pass the course, and they were accepted to graduate school on the condition that they pass their remaining coursework. The student has spoken to the instructor and asked for additional assistance in completing the assignment. The instructor was willing to work with the student in office hours to develop a firmer foundation on course content but was unable to provide a study guide or rubric to assist the student further, stating that it would not be fair to provide the student with a resource no other student had received. So, Heinz got desperate and began to think about using the assignment submitted by their roommate to another faculty member that taught the same course last semester.

DIT0. Should Heinz use the roommate's assignment?

Yes, he should use the assignment	I can't decide	No, he should not use the assignment

Second, read each of the items below and think of the issue that the item is raising. Then mark how important that issue was in making your decision about Heinz and the assignment.

Not important	Little importance	Some importance	Much importance	Great importance

- Should an instructor's rules be upheld?
- How natural it is for a desperate student to care so much for their future that they'd use their roommate's work?

- Is Heinz willing to risk getting caught as a cheater or getting expelled for the chance that using the roommate's assignment gets the desired grade?
- What is Heinz's role as a student or his influence with other students?
- Is Heinz using the assignment for himself or doing this solely to help someone else?
- Do instructors have the rights to their assignments that have to be respected?
- Is graduating this semester is more important than the possibility of expulsion?
- What values are going to be the basis how people act towards each other?
- Is the instructor allowed to hide behind at worthless rule which only protects the privileged?
- Is rule in this case is getting in the way of the most basic claim of any member of the learning community?
- Does the instructor deserve to be duped for being so uncaring?
- Would getting a good grade and graduating in such a case bring about more total good for the whole society?

MIAMI Questions

Moral judgment

In your opinion, for each of the behaviors described below, please indicate the extent that you personally think the behavior is morally/ethically wrong (i.e., a violation of principles of justice, fairness, rights, and the well-being of others).

Not at all morally/ethically wrong	Slightly morally/ethically wrong	Moderately morally/ethically wrong	Very morally/ethically wrong	Completely morally/ethically wrong

- Receiving unauthorized assistance from another person (either in person or electronically while completing an assignment.
- Working together on an assignment with other students when the instructor asked for individual work.
- Getting or paying someone else to do your academic work (e.g., essay, exam, assignment) and submitting it as your own.
- Having someone else pretend to be you (online or in-person) to complete a test, exam, or other graded assignment.
- Offering a professor, teacher or TA money, a gift, or a favor in exchange for academic benefit.
- Submitting a bibliography (references, works cited list) that contains sources you did not actually use/read/reference.
- Downloading course materials or a professor's materials from an unauthorized source.
- Getting questions or answers from someone who has already taken a test or exam.

Moral Disengagement

Please rate your agreement with the statements below.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

- If students have bad teachers, they cannot be blamed for cheating.
- Cheating in school is not a big deal when you consider corporate scandals in the business world.
- If others engage in cheating behavior, then the behavior is morally permissible.
- End results are more important than the means by which one pursues those results.
- It is OK to cheat to help one's friends.
- It is alright to cheat when a student's future happiness or success is at stake.
- It is appropriate to seek short-cuts as long as they are not at someone else's expense.

Cheating Behaviors

Please indicate whether (and how often if relevant) you have engaged in each of the following behaviors in the current and previous semester. If the behavior is not applicable to your academic program, select "n/a."

Response options:

Never Once 2-4 Times 5-9 Times 10+ Times n/a

- Using a false or forged excuse in order to gain an advantage (like extended time) on an assignment, test, or exam.
- Using unauthorized electronic devices (e.g., google glasses, smart watch, smart phone, cheat pen, nano wireless) during a test or exam.
- Working together on an assignment with other students when the instructor asked for individual work.
- Cheating in an internship, clinical setting, or other out of class academic experience.
- Uploading course materials or a professor's materials (e.g., lecture slides, tests, homework prompts, readings) to a website in order to get tutoring or ability to download materials.
- Submitting a bibliography (references, works cited list) that contains sources you did not actually use/read/reference.
- Copying from another student during a test or exam.
- Receiving unauthorized assistance from another person (either in person or electronically) while completing an assignment.
- Using unauthorized notes or sources during a test or exam.
- Getting questions or answers from someone who has already taken a test or exam.
- Paraphrasing or copying a few sentences or more from any source (such as a journal article, website, or another student's paper) without citing it in a paper or assignment you submitted.
- Using unauthorized electronic resources (e.g., articles, Wikipedia, YouTube) for a paper, project, homework, or other assignment.
- Downloading course materials or a professor's materials from an unauthorized source.
- Changing or making up lab or research data.
- Allowing another student to copy from you during an exam.
- Writing an assignment in one language and having someone (or a website) translate it into the language expected by the instructor without permission or acknowledgement.
- Submitting someone else's academic work as your own without their knowledge.

- Getting or paying someone else to do you academic work (e.g., essay, exam, assignment) and submitting it as your own.
- Having someone else pretend to be you (online or in-person) to complete a test, exam, or other graded assignment.
- Dowing academic work (e.g., essay, exam, assignment) for someone else.
- Submitting the same academic work in more than one course without permission from the instructor.
- Having someone else impersonate you to gain attendance points or credit.
- Offering a professor, teacher or TA money, a gift, or a favor in exchange for academic benefit.
- After taking a test or exam, providing test or exam questions or answers to another student.
- Cheating on a test or exam in any other way.
- Submitting academic work (e.g., essay, exam, assignment) generated in part or in total by artificial intelligence (e.g., ChatGPT, GoogleBard, Microsoft Co-Pilot, etc.) without permission from the instructor.

Demographics

- With which gender do you identify? (choose one or more)
- With which races/ethnicities do you identify? (choose one or more)
- Which college are you pursuing your degree in?
- Is your coursework at your current school/college/university in your first language?
- Please provide your institutional myID.

Honesty

Overall, how honestly would you say you were in answering this questionnaire?

Not at all honest	Not very honest	Fairly Honest	Very honest	Completely honest