

THE LEARNING PROCESS THROUGH STUDENT CONDUCT

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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that, by far, men are involved in the majority of campus crime, cheating, and other conduct violations (Harper et al., 2005). This study aimed to explore how student participants, specifically men, perceive and understand their learning through the conduct and hearing process. Gehring (2001) discusses how the conduct hearing is an environment that is conducive to student learning, but is sometimes hindered by the use of legalese and formality.

The purpose of this research study was to gain a deeper understanding of the learning process students experience when undergoing the student conduct process. Three research questions were identified to help make meaning of this research, including student characteristics, student self-definition, and the steps of the student conduct process. This was a mixed-methods study that included a survey of students who had gone through the student conduct process, as well as individual interviews. A survey was sent to 3,657 students, with 62 students responding to the invitation to participate. From this survey, participants were asked about their interest in discussing their experiences further, and five students were subsequently interviewed in more detail about their experiences with the student conduct process.

Quantitative data indicated that participants were likely to be White, male, and in their first year of college at the time of their violations. Additionally, data showed that students were most likely to formalize their learning in two areas of the student conduct process. One was the final stage of the student code of conduct process, which includes the student's reflection and learning that occurs after all sanctions are complete. The second stage was intervention, or being caught in the act

of violating the student code of conduct by an authority figure. Qualitative data showed that while interviewees experienced varying degrees of violations, they too held that the most learning came from the act of being caught violating policy.

When it comes to self-definition, students reported initial fear, frustration, and anxiety, followed by a sense of ease, relaxation, and relief after the process. Students had a collective misconception of what the student conduct process entailed and were guided through the process by stakeholders, including their hearing officer.

Implications included that students found email notices too strict, hearings were extremely helpful in alleviating fears, and relief was fully felt after sanctions were complete. Intervention officials should be aware that while students are often their own harshest critics, it is best to approach students who have violated policy in a helpful, polite, and inquisitive manner. Educators are encouraged to find engaging ways to help students understand content, especially in regard to alcohol and drug use. Facilitation should be engaging and fun while also teaching important material, and that fines are a biased and inequitable practice.

This research showed that student identities had little to do with their learning and outcomes as it relates to student conduct, which is contrary to much research on student conduct and law enforcement. Further research on this topic was specifically recommended, as the study had a limited scope and sample size. Further research on student conduct should focus on larger groups of participants from multiple institutions and types, as well as on the relationship between gender and the outcomes of student conduct.

This dissertation is dedicated to my teacher, mentor, coach, and director, Rebecca Meyer-Larson. Meylar, you have been a light and beacon of hope and direction since I first stepped into the theater in high school. As the person who helped my academic and creative journey begin, your words and insight have shown me that we all carry our light into the corners of every place we occupy. Truly, the magic of our words can change the world. Thank you for seeing something in me that I did not always know or recognize in myself, and for always being an instrument of change to those around you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Problem Statement

Sociological and historical studies have been conducted over time since the first problems with student behavior and alcohol use arose at the first colonial schools in the United States. Research has shown that, by far, men are involved in the majority of campus crime, cheating, and other conduct violations (Harper et al., 2005). While campus policy violators undergo the process of a conduct hearing, there are opportunities for college men to learn, reflect, and grow that are underutilized. I focused on how student participants, specifically men, understand and view their learning through the conduct and hearing process. Campus hearing officers have begun to explore learning outcomes for student conduct hearings, but have previously relied on the assumption that students learn from their hearings and the sanctions imposed upon them. There are areas of study that suggest college students involved in violations of the student code of conduct are more likely to be primed for growth and reflection. Gehring (2001) discusses how the conduct hearing is an environment that is conducive to student learning, but is sometimes hindered by the use of legalese and formality.

I began by understanding the factors that lead men to be the majority perpetrators of misconduct on college campuses. I examined the purpose of a conduct hearing or hearing board and the current limitations these meetings may have on student reflection and learning. Lastly, I took a deeper look at what can be accomplished through this research to understand better how the format of a hearing could be improved, as well as the learning experiences students may currently be having. I also examined some of the

cultural and sociological perspectives on why college men are the majority violators of campus policies.

Because of the cultural limitations placed on men to express themselves beyond the socially constructed expectations, Capraro (2000) explores the negative consequences surrounding crying, fear, shame, guilt, depression, and joy that become masked and limited based on these expectations for men. Emotions like anger, violence, and activities such as binge drinking, consuming alcohol underage, are all versions of acceptable behavior to some of the men at our colleges and universities (Harper et al., 2005). The social construction of hegemonic masculinity- “boys will be boys” exemption from responsibility from society, and the fear of feminization are all factors that can lead more men to have higher rates of conduct problems than women (Capraro, 2000). Men are more likely than their women counterparts to participate in high-risk student conduct, sexual activity, vandalism, and violence. High risk is defined as binge drinking, drug use and abuse, violating the law, violence, and other serious levels of campus policy violations. Many of these expectations come in some form that we readily accept by culture and the construct of what it means to be a man in the United States (Ludeman, 2004; Peralta, 2009). These expectations include insulting women, boasting about sexual exploits, homophobic jokes, needing to look and seem masculine, and seeing ‘getting into trouble’ as not a big deal, or even that judicial meetings are an expectation of the college experience and being a man (Harper et al., 2005).

These socially accepted outlets for expression are readily seen in college residence halls, too, with violations around vandalism, bias-related language, and drinking. It is also true that men have been found to not only be the majority of

perpetrators, but also the majority of victims of the consequences surrounding hegemonic masculinity regarding violence and crime (Hong, 2000). Now that I have presented some of the factors contributing to why men may be the majority violators of campus policy, the next step of the process can be explored, which is the conduct hearing or hearing board.

After students are found to have violated campus policies, conduct hearings are arranged to help them walk through a formal process, understand the consequences of their actions, have their side of the story heard, and access due process. Campus hearings are traditionally held one-on-one between the student and a hearing officer, who conducts the hearing. Hearing boards are established for more severe violations and are typically held as a 2–to 4-hour roundtable discussion, organized by a hearing officer, involving the student, campus partners, witnesses, and others. Campus hearings or hearing boards have a set of rules, standards, and consistency to follow for each student. National laws typically ensure this consistency, as do the Department of Education and campus policies, which guarantee students due process and a fair and equitable hearing (Lowery, 2006). Therefore, an unintended consequence for a campus hearing officer may be an inability to help a student reflect on their violation or the consequences of their actions throughout the hearing, thereby hindering the opportunity for learning and growth.

Each hearing, whether one-on-one or a roundtable board discussion, begins with the student's ability to read the incident report, which is a synopsis of the events surrounding the incident. Students are then read their student rights and asked if they have any questions about the report or their rights. The hearing itself is next, where the student will have the opportunity to recall their thoughts on what happened during the

incident. Sanctions are given as outcomes, which may result in anything from a minor educational outcome, such as a reflection paper or essay, to probation, suspension, or dismissal from the institution. Thoughts of reflection are sometimes reserved for outcomes and sanctions resulting from the hearing process. It is possible that college men feel pressure to maintain and manage their emotions during a hearing to appeal to their hearing officer in order to proceed through the motions of the hearing. This may limit a student's ability to reflect and learn. "Off-script questions from a hearing officer may encourage some of these thoughts for reflection, but their role is solely to get a finding of responsibility for the charges the student has been assigned in the case. This inhibition for reflection describes another problem with the conduct system, which is an inability to stray from the rigid format of a hearing. The procedure for conducting a process review involves having a student read the incident statement, being informed of their rights, holding a hearing, and deciding outcomes. This process is rigid in order to protect students and prevent bias, but at the possible cost of learning and reflection.

The student conduct process is established to provide students with due process, the opportunity to share their perspective on the events, and facilitate growth and learning through a fair and accessible process (Kaplin & Lee, 2014). However, a growing dialogue and research have been established to measure and observe growth and development through the student conduct process. Lancaster and Waryold (2008) suggest that while conduct hearings protect the interests of the college or university, they should also promote the growth and development of students. Providing that campus administrators can measure this learning is a separate issue. Several campus offices have also begun to examine how aspects of classroom learning can facilitate the implementation of learning

goals, learning outcomes, a syllabus, or even assessments to showcase their work. In many areas within Student Affairs, a growing body of work has been devoted to a curricular approach for learning and growth, including learning outcomes and a syllabus-like structure. The Institute for the Curricular Approach (ICA) is an annual conference dedicated to developing models, curricula, and learning outcomes for students within offices in Student Affairs. Some representatives from Student Conduct have begun attending, but the majority of attendees tend to be from Housing offices.

As the work of college administrators continues to evolve, budgets tighten, and education funding sources decrease, the information gathered to provide to campus partners, presidents, and the board of directors regarding outside-the-classroom learning highlights the need for offices such as student conduct to showcase the learning they encourage as well. Although an office of student conduct would likely remain a necessity in any campus hierarchy, each functional area is being challenged to demonstrate how it contributes to learning on college campuses. Both Schuh (2013) and Lake (2009) discuss the importance of establishing learning outcomes and then measuring them through assessment techniques specifically designed for student conduct. Assessments to demonstrate that learning has occurred within the conduct hearing process could be both fascinating and helpful in improving student learning and growth outcomes, as well as highlighting the learning contributions of student conduct offices to the overall learning experience of students at the institution.

A conduct hearing is a controlled setting in which administrators hope students can come to terms with their actions, understand the impact these actions have had on others, and reflect on why these violations occurred in the first place. Each conduct

hearing includes a campus administrator equipped and ready to lead discussions on examining frustration, anxiety, fear, and other negative emotions that college men may face because of societal pressures. However, the conduct hearings are rigid and typically focused on following guidelines set by the institution for due process, with opportunities for reflection or the expression of emotions often being an afterthought, and should be prioritized (Gehring, 2001). Moments for reflection and learning can help create a space where students can focus on the violation, prevent it from happening again, come to terms with who they may have impacted besides themselves, and have a space to be vulnerable and ask questions. A space allocated toward this goal may include positive outcomes for both students and staff adjudicating conduct hearings (Karp and Sacks, 2014).

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the student conduct process in detail, identifying how student learning and reflection are intertwined. Specifically, student characteristics, student self-definition, and the stages of the conduct process have been examined to determine how these impact growth, learning, and reflection. Self-definition in this research refers to the beliefs a student holds about themselves and their understanding of their experiences.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. Do Differences in Characteristics Among Students Impact Their Student Conduct Experiences with Learning and Reflection?
2. How Does Self-Definition Among Students Affect Their Learning and Reflection?

3. In What Ways are the Student Conduct Hearing Stages Related to Student Learning and Reflection?

Work is being conducted at national conferences, Student Affairs offices, and housing departments to establish learning outcomes for students that can be assessed and measured to determine if learning has occurred among students who undergo the student conduct process. These same learning outcomes could have a profound impact on the outcomes of students participating in the conduct process, as well as the value of observing students learn and grow from the perspective of administrators. These areas of focus for learning could enable hearing officers to achieve better outcomes with students, allowing students to learn more from the hearing process, and potentially resulting in fewer violations and repeat violations of the student code of conduct.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of literature focused on several key factors related to men through the conduct process, including hearings and sanctions, as well as the reasons why these policy violations occur. First, the issue of rigidity in conduct hearings and the constraints placed on hearing officers for limited reflection and learning in sanctioning is discussed. Next, I examined the typical violations that occur on a college campus and how identity and gender intersect, followed by an analysis of the cultural and sociological context in which men often receive positive recognition and praise from peers for these violations. A brief outline is also provided. This examination will reveal why men often feel that, despite being privileged in society, the college climate can marginalize them, leading to a desire for positive attention through policy violations in order to feel seen, heard, valued, and part of the group.

Student Conduct and Campus Policy

Generally, conduct processes deviate little between institutions, and language tends to be formal, fitting the requirements of legal counsel and their advice, as referred to by Dannells (1997) as “creeping legalism” and the rigidity of the conduct process. All institutions must follow guidelines cited by the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, allowing for the following minimum steps of due process: a notice of a charge to students, a summary of the evidence, an opportunity to be heard, a finding of responsibility that is based in evidence, and finally notification of the outcome of the hearing (Lowery, 2006). Due to this rigid structure based on law and legal language, a dissonance exists between the severity of communication students receive, such as

conduct letters notifying them of their hearing time and date, and the growth opportunities staff see in one-on-one meetings for the student. Students, for example, may inflate what they imagine their outcomes could be prior to their hearing, such as being removed from the institution, losing their scholarship, or being removed from housing. In contrast, their actual sanctions may include probation, a fine, an essay, or other low-risk educational outcomes. This dissonance that students feel in conduct hearings, where they violate policy, is perceived as adversarial and punitive rather than an opportunity for education, learning, and reflection, which sets students up for a less-than-favorable conduct experience (Dannels, 1997; Gehring, 2001; Travelstead, 1987). Similarly, in their research on student conduct and its influence on student learning, Stimpson and Janosik (2015) urge conduct officers to consider the impact that procedures for student conduct have on student learning, even if they merely follow the guidelines set before them. If a student is merely provided their charges, the student conduct process is being followed as required. However, practitioners and educators should be asking whether students receive and understand those charges, not merely presenting them (Stimpson & Janosik, 2015). Beyond the rigidity of the student conduct process is another barrier to learning, which is the outcomes of hearings in the form of sanctions. Sometimes, these sanctions are punitive in nature, such as fines and probation, which may teach students various lessons or no lessons, according to some research.

In their research on the perceptions of conduct administrators, Lindsay (2009) suggests that the weakness of the conduct process can lead to it becoming overly administrative and punitive if left to the discretion of hearing officers to determine their decisions in individual cases. In fear of punitive sanctions, students are sometimes caught

in a double jeopardy situation regarding reflection on why they decided to violate campus policies, as such reflection in a hearing may lead a student to feel they are admitting to a violation. These violations, such as underage drinking, illegal drug use, cheating, biased graffiti, or hate language, are attached to a slew of various sanctions or outcomes such as probation, fines, reflection essays, creative projects focused on learning, or research papers. Punitive sanctions, such as fines, are primarily concerned with addressing the minimal reflection available during conduct hearings. These sanctions encourage students not to violate the policy, provided they cannot afford to pay the sanction. In their research on student departure from colleges and universities, Quincho Apumayta et al. (2024) found that lack of financial resources was the primary contributor to student departure. While some students easily pay off fines for underage drinking, a \$200 to \$500 fine may lead to a spiraling downward or even departure from the institution due to financial distress for a student without sufficient financial resources. How are conduct administrators supposed to support the goals of Gehring (2001) in creating sanctions that allow a student an opportunity to learn and grow if students are unable to meet the requirements of a punitive sanction or fine? In their research on restrictive punitive sanctions, such as fines, Sharry (2022) discusses how a one-size-fits-all approach to sanctions can eliminate bias and establish consistency. They go on to discuss what is lost, however, which is the ability to tailor sanctions to a student. Sharry (2022) argues that this intent to inhibit bias only creates it by establishing punitive sanctions that are equal and consistent but not equitable.

Much like research recommending the abolition of cash bail systems in criminal justice, which create bias on the basis of socio-economic, racial, and other social

identities (Concannon & Na, 2023), fines create an inequitable practice that equates violating the underage consumption of alcohol policy as “free” for students with financial resources and costly for students without. While not directly related to student conduct among college students, sociological research on the criminal legal system reveals long-term negative consequences for individuals subjected to legal sanctions, such as fees and fines, particularly among those from low-income backgrounds (Harris et al., 2022). How can a system of learning truly achieve equitable outcomes if it includes fines? Other non-financial disparities emerge when discussing the limited attention paid to the learning process in student conduct, such as community service, restorative justice, or other service-based sanctions. How can conduct administrators assign punitive outcomes, such as fines, to students who disobey state and national laws on college campuses, knowing that this inequity helps to further create a divide in student outcomes and a destructive educational environment that perpetuates and reinforces bias, especially to those from low-income backgrounds (Harris et al., 2022)? While research on punitive sanctions tends to lean towards adverse learning outcomes, bias, and inequity, is there still a possibility of positive outcomes that can provide hope for learning and reflection?

According to their research on in-person educational sanctions, specifically for alcohol offenses, alcohol consumption went down by noticeable rates (Carey et al., 2009). In-person educational intervention sanctions offer a positive path towards reflection, learning, and dropping repeat violators. Especially for alcohol, this is an essential finding for campus administrators. Beyond educational sanctioning, research has also shown that the hearing itself might prove to be a beneficial learning moment for students. In their study on the educational outcomes of the hearing process, Howell

(2005) reported that learning does occur as part of the conduct hearing, regardless of the learning experienced during the sanctions portion of the conduct process. Educational outcomes and sanctions could then help enhance these learning moments achieved during the hearing process, especially if required by the institution or governing body to be paired with punitive sanctions, as discussed above, which have a neutral or negative impact on educational outcomes.

Conduct processes tend to include a high level of consistency intended to ensure the conduct experience is fair and impartial towards students who undergo it as a result of violating policy. However, there appears to be a disparity in how identity influences the impact of student conduct hearings for men. College men are in constant struggle to prove themselves to their same-sex peers with little to no regard to empathy, emotion, or closeness (Harper et al., 2005). This over-exertion of hypermasculinity could contribute to their being overrepresented in underage drinking and student conduct cases at colleges and universities (Capraro 2000). In their discussions on “cool posing”, Harris et al. (2011) discuss how these exertions of hypermasculinity are heightened among Black men. Whether combating sociological racist stereotypes of Black men or attempting to fit in with the portrayals of the ‘hypermasculine college man’ at a predominately White institution, Black men are especially susceptible to unhealthy coping strategies (Harris et al., 2011). College men compensating for a lack of capital can limit administrators' ability to conduct the process from a sociological perspective. For example, a student who is extremely homophobic may be portraying this behavior because of an insecurity surrounding their sexuality, or perhaps they are gay. How can a hearing officer safely navigate a conversation regarding identity, the reason a man has violated policy, or begin

to peel back the societal expectations around them when the formal hearing process is not set up to do so? Do we rely on “off-script” discussion or an expert hearing officer? Can we ever expect students to self-reflect and grow independently outside of a hearing setting? Indeed, the students we try to reach most frequently for their delinquency may need these lessons the most. Beyond these sociological constraints on learning in conduct hearings, other structural limitations exist as part of the physical process of conduct hearings, such as the bias of conduct administrators and the setting and format of hearings.

In opposition to the limitations above, Karp and Sacks (2014) argue that there is also an opportunity for development to meet the goal of reflection and learning in the hearing process, specifically in restorative justice practices. The opportunity to utilize a captive audience towards education by incorporating elements of reflection, through sanctions, administering a survey, or asking for feedback about the student conduct process. Students charged with violations will need to meet with a hearing officer. This presents an excellent opportunity to discuss with this student the responsibility of their actions, establish learning outcomes that will benefit the student, and Ludeman (2004), suggest that colleges and universities have an opportunity to reclaim a portion of the conduct process that can meet students' needs for growth. In their paper on college men, emotions, and misconduct, they discuss the need to fulfill both the legal requirements for due process and lean on the student affairs lens of learning and development (Ludeman, 2004). There are first-year college men who treat college as a time to experiment and see what they can get away with. Are there ways we can also remove some of these constraints that prevent our conduct process from matching this experimentation?

Gehring (2001) suggests that a review of the current standards and structures we place students through should result in a better understanding of how this process can be influenced and enhanced to cater to both legal requirements but also developmental milestones for college students. Some colleges have taken restorative justice and integrative learning to the next step within this framework of thought, focusing on holding students accountable while also emphasizing the importance of behaviors, reflection, and the impact of their actions on others. These restorative justice programs are unique and individual to specific campuses and have not yet received a widespread course of action for best practices in student conduct. The approach is to bring together peers or the victims/survivors of a conduct violation and involve them in the process of rebuilding a community that has been harmed. (DeVore and Gentilcore, 1999).

Several topics of discussion regarding the opportunities for learning and reflection through conduct hearings have begun in other ways, beyond the conduct hearing itself. Among these topics are educational and punitive sanctions, assessment, repeat offenders, and restorative justice. As students go through the conduct system, hearing officers hope they are learning lessons to prevent the same behavior from occurring. As repeat offenders come through the conduct process, was the complication of an overly rigid and formal system at fault? In their research on repeat offenders, Kompalla and McCarthy (2001) found that educational sanctions, regardless of the type, led to fewer repeat offenders. This research urged colleges and universities to consider high-impact educational practices, community service, or restorative justice initiatives that could mitigate over-punitive fines and probation outcomes. In their 2021 report for alcohol statistics, it was found that 49.3% full-time college students aged 18 to 22 in America

drank alcohol in the past month (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2022). While this statistic includes students who are 21 or 22 years old, these numbers are staggering. Further, of the 18 to 22-year-olds who drank, 27.4% of them experienced binge drinking behaviors. Binge drinking is considered five or more drinks for men, and four or more drinks for women in one occasion (SAMHSA, 2022). Since policy violations such as underage drinking are inevitable and part of a larger cultural rite of passage for many American men, why can't the conduct process integrate a sense of learning and reflection in addition to the rigidity and focus on punishment? Policy violation resulting in sanctions is the end of the narrative when it comes to campus policy violations. Instead of hoping learning is happening as a result of these sanctions, several areas of research on learning outcomes point towards a way to establish, assess, and measure if learning is taking place.

Learning Outcomes

Besides the pressures each functional area faces to prove that their department is helping students grow, learn, and reflect, as mentioned above, practitioners have another problem: demonstrating that students are learning. In student conduct, a good starting point is the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) standards. In their suggestions, Dean (2006) discusses the need for learning outcomes as a helpful tool in measuring student learning and demonstrating what students achieve through their involvement in each functional area. Dean (2006) goes on to suggest that learning outcomes should be aligned with an institution's guiding documents, tailored to each functional area, measurable, and showcase what students learn from the programs they participate in. This supports the work of other scholars, such as Chickering and

Reisser (1993), who call for institutions to increase campus engagement across all functional areas and departments.

In their research on student conduct and measuring learning outcomes for educational sanctions across several institutions, Draper and Davis (2014) suggest that learning outcomes should be part of a culture of assessment within the institution, driving the work of student affairs forward. They continue by saying that each educational sanction should be tied to specific learning outcomes to showcase a sanctions better is effective. Lastly, can students accurately report their own learning and reflection? In their study on student learning and development, Bowman and Seifert (2011) investigated the tendency for student self-report data on learning to be inaccurate. A great example is a student reporting to their advisor that they really liked a class but did not learn much from it. Bowman and Seifert (2011) argue that self-report data for course assessment are then flawed, and students tend to under-report the developmental milestones and lessons they have learned inside and outside the classroom. Next, let us further examine the theory as it relates to behavior and student conduct violations to identify why some inconsistencies may occur when men violate campus policies.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is an examination of the amount of symbolic power afforded to someone based on their control over limited resources and their expectations from culture and society (Dumais, 2002). Bourdieu (1986) and Dumais (2002) argued that cultural capital is directly intertwined with habitus, or the perspective a person has of themselves and their place in society. Students experiencing the conduct process are likely to be impacted by both habitus and cultural capital. For this study, cultural capital will be

analyzed in relation to the hierarchies of power established among college men who act out or violate campus policies. The ideas of gaining cultural capital through physical athleticism, socioeconomics, homophobia, dismissively discussing women, or gender-dominant relationships from high school (Klein, 2006) may continue into the college realm and directly impact men and their conduct in college. Cultural capital is argued by Klein (2006) to be gained in the following ways: athletic ability, physical fighting, navigating conversations with women, socioeconomic power, pretending or feigning a lack of scholastic ability, and excluding others through social capital. It should be no surprise, then, to see many campus policy violations related to attempting to increase the social standing that men may hold, such as bias related to gender, homophobia, vandalism, and other ways to show toughness and cool factors. This list from research conducted on high school students did not include drugs or alcohol; however, the research of others points to these drugs and alcohol may lead to an accrual of social capital (Berkowitz, 2004; Capraro, 2000; Klein, 2006). This finding aligns with other research indicating that men typically arrive at college with a strong academic foundation, as evidenced by their GPAs; however, they often lack cultural capital and experiences outside the classroom that can help them navigate various aspects of college life, and they require assistance in acclimating to campus (Harris & Struve, 2009).

In their attempts to adjust to college life, men often find ways to continue hierarchies familiar in the social structures they navigated prior to postsecondary education. One way this is evident is through the portrayal of masculinity in public. Masculinity and the degree to which men rated their peers in terms of manhood were measured by hypermasculine expressions such as alcohol consumption, misogyny, and

homophobia in regard to “male bonding” (Harris, 2008). Direct action to understand why men violate campus policies, such as drinking alcohol, homophobia, misogyny, mistreating others, cheating, stealing, violence, biased language, vandalism, drug use, and other things, will lead to better outcomes for students in hearings. By helping campus administrators understand the motives that college men face when they violate campus policy, the ability to help these students reflect and learn through the hearing process may be enhanced. Only then might college men be encouraged to address the existence of a social structure that is perpetuated by their actions in violating campus policies.

Do I Matter

A direct link between acting out and men struggling to assert their masculinity is discussed by Schieferecke and Card (2013) in relation to Nancy Schlossberg’s theory of marginality and mattering. In their research on how to help men succeed in college, they examine the cognitive dissonance between men who hold a privileged social identity yet struggle to achieve the same levels of success as their female peers in grades, campus involvement, maturity, and peer group relationships (Schieferecke & Card, 2013). Men with little to much campus involvement were asked questions such as, “What effect, if any, do you perceive being a male has on your campus life outside the classroom”? The students also discussed other similar questions. There has been a national theme of men being underrepresented in higher education compared to national enrollment trends, and the men who participated in the study were well aware of this. The men in their study exhibited several themes, including feeling unseen, invisible, and like an outsider (Schieferecke & Card, 2013). These three themes of feeling forlorn have a direct tie to how their regard for being seen through harmful acts was reinforced. Through their

research, they found that an immediate reaction from campus administrators was always warranted for negative behaviors and policy violations, but praise was seldom given for work well done (Schieferecke & Card, 2013). Praise was the top theme that emerged regarding marginality and mattering, and if men did not find a place or space where someone recognized their efforts in a job, classroom, or social outlet, their experiences of feeling marginalized were significantly worse. These themes help to better understand a nuance in the theory of marginality and mattering, and delve further into that cognitive dissonance that, although men are a privileged social identity, men have taken notice that they are not achieving at as high a level as their women colleagues on college campuses and universities (Schieferecke & Card, 2013).

In their research on the social construction of college men's identity, Davis (2008) found that college men may value one thing but do another and inhibit behavior out of fear of others' perceptions. Examples included self-expression or positive behaviors that were perceived to be outside of their gender roles and were therefore inhibited or discouraged. This may lead men to feel that their actions are predetermined by social pressures or society, limiting their ability to express individuality, self-expression, or develop their identity in college. This limitation may enhance feelings of being unseen, left out, or, as mentioned above, receiving attention only when negative actions are exhibited. Other studies have shown that when men want to fit in with the group, especially with regard to alcohol consumption, their assumptions about their peers lead to pluralistic ignorance, or the overestimation of the frequency and amount of alcohol their peers consume than their own consumption. This can lead men to feel the need to resolve the dissonance between themselves and their peers, causing college men to consume

more alcohol than they would have on their own in order to fit in or matter to their peers (Suls & Green, 2003).

Conclusion of Evidence

The research on student development and the impact that developmental moments can have on students is vast, encompassing a range of theories, research, best practices, and guiding documents, some of which were mentioned previously. A body of research regarding the subtext of this research, specifically around college men, also exists and has been previously mentioned. College men are the majority violators of codes of conduct, and the areas of masculinity and hegemony are essential factors to note for stakeholders such as conduct hearing officers and campus conduct hearing board administrators. This research aimed to explore ways to enhance learning and reflection, ultimately improving outcomes from hearings and sanctions, and potentially reducing the number of student code of conduct violations. What has not been widely researched and written about is the ability and role that student conduct administrators play in this growth and learning throughout the conduct process, as well as what students can do to grow, reflect, and learn through the student conduct experience.

This study examined whether college men experience learning, reflection, and growth through the student conduct process. This aspect of the student conduct process is essential because there have been direct connections between student conduct violations and college men. This study may be used to inform campus conduct offices in their approach to understanding students going through the conduct process, and to encourage growth and learning. By conducting this study, I aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how campus administrators can have a direct impact on the students they hold hearings

with and how expanding the conduct process to include reflection and learning could benefit both students and staff. Since conduct hearings and processing review meetings are established to be as unbiased as possible, a strict procedure and set of norms must be followed. There is also an opportunity for expansion and development in this area, given the captive student audience.

Although the hearing process can be rigid and limiting, campus conduct staff do have a voice in how students are adjudicated and sanctioned in some “off-script” moments, and these areas of flexibility allow for learning and reflection to take place. Conduct administrators should not need to rely on the skills and abilities of a good hearing officer for this learning and reflection to occur. Literature discussing the learning process through student conduct hearings is scarce, and even research on college men and masculinities suggests seeking an understanding rather than attempting to address a sociological and societal problem directly. More research needs to be done to find ways in which college men can reflect and learn through the conduct hearing process, be listened to, and lead to better outcomes for hearing officers, and even decrease instances of campus policy violations while minimizing the perception college men have of being marginalized (Schieferecke & Card, 2013).

As noted above, stakeholders include any campus administrator who initiates conduct hearings, as well as anyone committed to student learning. These results are essential for providing context and clarity to campus hearing officers and the learning that must take place when students violate the code of conduct. This research addressed several key questions, including: In what ways do college men learn best in emotionally charged situations, such as during conduct hearings? Does a student who has violated a

policy have an opportunity to understand their actions, the impact, and reflect and learn from these actions in a hearing? In what ways can student conduct administrators add opportunities for student growth, reflection, and development during the student conduct hearing process? Whose role is it to understand why campus policies are violated in the first place? How can we address student learning through conduct when the issue is far larger in scope and is being sociologically maintained?

Work needs to be done to better understand the over-representation of college men in campus policy violations. Men face societal, cultural, and social pressures to fit in and survive, and will even violate campus policies at higher rates than their female colleagues (Harper et al., 2005). First-year college students on campus are more likely to violate the student code of conduct. Among these violations, there is a high likelihood that students have done so by consuming alcohol under the age of 21 (National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2021). Theories of cultural capital (Dumais, 2002), marginality, and mattering (Schieferecke & Card, 2013) have direct ties to the literature on college men and campus policy violations (Harper et al., 2005). College men attempt to navigate cultural capital and the expectations of masculinity. However, still, these are limiting many men from setting foot at the starting line of their college experience. In regard to both relationships and personal development, hegemonic masculinity could even hinder development and sense of self and inhibit developmental stages of several identity-based theories (Capraro 2000). Especially in terms of social and cultural capital, the establishment of positive relationships appears to be a topic that men have struggled to grasp when feeling isolated and encountering others who also feel isolated and have low cultural capital (Klein 2006).

Even when men hold a privileged social identity in the United States, many still feel disadvantaged in terms of higher education, social integration, and success (Schieferecke & Card, 2013). Men are aware that there are more women peers in their classes, and that women are performing better academically, socially, in leadership engagement, and in adjusting to life on campus. These observations of feeling lost, unseen, or not mattering have had a significant negative impact on men and their sense of self, and more research must be done to understand better additional ways we can continue to support and develop men away from the negative behaviors connected with hegemonic masculinity. These feelings of inadequacy can lead some college men to violate campus policies in an attempt to gain additional social and cultural capital, thereby becoming their ideal version of themselves (Davis, 2008; Suls & Green, 2003). This eventually creates an inauthentic expression of self that does not align with internal motivators. It will be crucial to continue examining research and theories to gain a deeper understanding of the implications for how men perceive masculinity and self.

The student conduct process is strict to promote consistency, eliminate bias, and ensure a fair and due process. Although these goals aim to maintain fairness, they can also be inherently unfair. The hearing structure does not allow a hearing officer to deviate from the script, encourage students to reflect or learn, or produce punitive outcomes for students rather than educational ones (Gehring, 2001). Sociological studies in the criminal legal system show that marginalized people are more likely to violate laws, and punitive measures like fines highlight the unfair impact these outcomes have on marginalized people with lower financial resources (Harris et al., 2022). Could this also translate to punitive sanctions, such as fines, for college students at colleges and

universities? Despite the issues with punitive outcomes and sanctions, research indicates that a conduct hearing can be a practical setting for students to reflect on and learn from their actions, and a few simple steps can foster this growth (Ludeman, 2004). This research aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the reflection and learning experiences of male students during conduct hearings and explore how campus administrators can support reflection and learning to enhance outcomes for students, campuses, and hearing officers.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

This research employed a pragmatic, sequential mixed-methods approach, where a survey instrument served as the basis for a set of individual interviews. Mertens (2015) describes a pragmatic sequential mixed methods approach as a research method that utilizes both qualitative and quantitative instruments sequentially, with one providing the basis for the next. The survey data were gathered to collect participants' basic information and also inform me about interested participants for individual interviews. Both sets of data were used to draw conclusions and make recommendations for policy. A mixed-methods approach to this research helped to strengthen the results, as the survey provided quantitative data but limited qualitative depth. At the same time, individual interviews allowed me to delve deeper into the experiences of college students. The survey instrument employed a non-experimental survey research design, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of college students who violate campus policy, including their characteristics and the factors that may have led to their infractions. Questions for the survey instrument included basic student identifiers, whether the case has been completed and closed, year in school, type of violation that occurred, and overall satisfaction with the process. Other survey questions included the following:

1. How would you rate yourself as a student (1-5 Likert Scale)
2. Have you attended a conduct hearing or hearing board while a student at your university?

3. Prior to your hearing, did you have any exposure to the hearing process? For example, did a friend go through a hearing and tell you about it? Did you read the student code of conduct? If yes, please explain.

The survey included a final question regarding interest in participating in interviews with the primary researcher. These interviews employed a semi-structured approach, focused on the experiences of college men when they are called to the student conduct office for violating campus policies. This research investigated how college men experienced the process of having a conduct hearing, as well as each of the steps that coincide with the hearing process. Interview questions included:

1. How do students make sense of their college experience?
 - a. How do students reflect on their experiences at Atlantic University?
 - b. How might student conduct and violations of the student code of conduct shape these reflections?
2. How has student conduct enhanced or detracted from the learning experience?
 - a. Were the conduct hearings helpful for student learning and reflection?
 - b. Was learning coming from the staff or themselves?
 - c. Were educational sanctions effective at teaching or reflecting?
 - d. Was conflict avoidance or reformation a more possible outcome?

Individual interviews were an appropriate approach, as students may vary significantly based on several factors, including year in school, violation of the code of conduct, the sanctions they received, and their satisfaction with the hearing process, among others.

Research Site

This research was conducted at a large public university on the East Coast of the United States, involving students who had at least one conduct violation that led to a hearing. Variables collected from interested subjects included confirmation of attendance at a hearing or hearing board, involvement on campus, race, and gender. The final question of the survey inquired about participants' interest in the study, specifically regarding the proposed goal and intended outcome. Conducting semi-structured interviews with students in a qualitative setting enabled me to delve more deeply into the interview format, explore in-depth questions, and gain a deeper understanding of the student perspective on learning from participants. Participants for interviews were chosen by finding male students of any other identities who have mid-level cases, such as alcohol consumption that led to a hospital transport, drug use or abuse, multiple conduct hearings, or other mid-level violations. Students were excluded from the interview if their conduct hearing involved serious offenses such as Title IX violations or other severe infractions. Interview participants were selected based on their interest and scheduling conflicts to facilitate further questions that could be asked in the survey.

This institution was selected due to its ease of access and the ability to share the results. Staff and faculty at this institution had experience gathering student data from participants. At the time the data for this study were collected, staff in the office of Student Conduct were also conducting research through a satisfaction survey, which was designed to gain a better understanding of the students they serve. This research may, in turn, lead to program development, altering norms or approaches, or improving the process for conducting a hearing.

Data Collection

Creswell (2013) notes that researchers should be aware of confirmation bias, which is the unconscious tendency to confirm one's own experiences or beliefs. I strived to be aware of these biases in conducting this research to understand better students who violate the student code of conduct. Creswell (2014) explains that the role of a researcher is to make sense of the comments of participants being studied and to recognize personal biases that shape interpretations. Creswell (2013) states that there is no proper way for the researcher to completely remove themselves from the research experience. The concept of bracketing, or “*epoche*,” where investigators try to view research from a fresh perspective, is essential but cannot be achieved flawlessly. Merriam (2009) discusses the importance of reflecting on the researcher's own experiences, attempting to view the research as new and fresh, and avoiding the bias that the lens of previous experiences, prejudices, viewpoints, or assumptions can introduce. I reflected on my own experiences as a student conduct officer and set those aside as I investigated the learning and reflection of college men as they navigated conduct hearings.

Once the survey data had been collected and students who were interested in interviews had been identified, an email was sent to establish interview times and dates. As fewer participants were identified than anticipated, participants were instead identified based on their interest, that I was not their previous hearing officer for a policy violation, that they indeed attended a hearing, and the limited ability to research participants. Eighteen participants were identified and recruited, and five interviews were conducted. While all 18 participants were initially recruited for interviews, only five participants were scheduled and completed the interviews. The computer used to keep track of and

communicate with students was kept separate from the computer used to conduct the interview and record via the online meeting tool Zoom. Participants established a pseudonym to protect their identity before the interview. While gathering information from participants, I was cautious to ensure that perceptions of their experience were either gathered in a way that validated claims or that follow-up questions were asked to solidify their worth further. Individual thoughts were gathered in interview settings to enhance the validity of this study. Interviews were conducted individually, and each participant received \$20 in compensation via an electronic gift card.

Instruments

For the initial method of information gathering, a brief survey was sent to students who had violated campus policy and attended a campus hearing or hearing board via email. The survey email sent to students can be found in Appendix B. The sample size for the survey consisted of 62 participants interested in research, and subsequently, participants were selected for individual interviews. The survey was sent directly to students through a means of a database system. The survey instrument is included in Appendix A. This instrument was included as a link in email communication explaining the intent and purpose of this research. For the email, see Appendix C. The risks and benefits of participation were outlined, along with a final question regarding interest in participating in individual interviews. The minimum number of respondents for interviews was determined to be between 10 and 12, and 18 students expressed interest in individual interviews. Based on discussions with staff in student conduct, knowledge about qualitative research, and recommendations from colleagues, it was planned that 10-12 participants would be interviewed to gather enough quality information, as well as an

appropriate estimate for how many students would respond to the survey instrument or back out later with interest or availability for the formal interview portion of the research. Ultimately, five students were interviewed.

For the following method of information gathering, interviews were conducted with students who had expressed an interest in being interviewed for additional research. In 45- to 60-minute extended interviews, information was gathered regarding students' perceptions of reflection and learning that occur during the hearing process. Direct questions such as "What did you learn as a result of your conduct hearing?" or "What part of the conduct experience would you change to set you up for success?" were asked. These questions and others were semi-structured, and follow-up questions were also asked to gain a better understanding from participants. Students were recruited directly as a result of the initial survey instrument, and interviews were conducted online through Zoom conferences to ensure privacy between the primary researcher, the student participating in the interview, and others. The questions in this interview protocol are listed in Appendix D.

Due to the sensitive nature of this research, students were only invited to participate after they understood the privacy and risks associated with the interview and had given their consent via a consent form prior to the interviews being conducted. See Appendix E for the interview consent form. Confidentiality for this study was maintained through the use of pseudonyms for interviews. A code sheet with guidelines was used, showing that pseudonyms rather than the person's name were used in transcripts and reported data. Data for student participants, their consent forms, and their pseudonyms have been stored in separate locations on different computers and kept in secure offices

and homes, locked and secured. The risk associated with this research was low, and the topics of student experiences during the conduct process were also considered to be of low risk. Students were encouraged to share their personal experiences, but were also directed to share only as much as they felt comfortable.

It is worth noting that another office on campus also handles cases, specifically the Housing office. These cases that Student Conduct is aware of involve students who physically reside outside of buildings within the Housing system. Since I have indirect relationships with the Office of Student Conduct and its staff, special care was taken to ensure that participants were impartial and unbiased in their interactions with the Office of Student Conduct, legal counsel, the Temple University Institutional Review Board, and faculty and staff advisors.

Data Analysis

Frequencies and statistical analysis were utilized as guiding frameworks to understand the survey data for this study. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS software, and analysis of variance yielded several statistically significant findings. Within these analyses, both statistically significant and insignificant data were examined to gain a deeper understanding of the research data. Because much of the survey data yielded few statistically significant results, frequencies were most often utilized to lend meaning to the survey data.

Once data had been collected from students through individual interviews, I revisited the topic to describe my own experiences in full detail. Creswell (2013) discusses this importance as another check to attempt to set aside personal experiences and bias prior to diving into the research. As themes emerged from interviews, the trends

and final results of the data were compared and reviewed against the original research questions. The initial data review involved open coding to create categories based on the three research questions. Since there were so few interviews conducted for this research, a secondary review of data and an axial coding structure were not developed; instead, the three themes were utilized in further analysis from the interviews.

Creswell (2013) states that the following steps should be taken to understand this rich data better: (a) Develop significant statements from interviews, (b) Take significant statements and group them into larger “meaning units” or themes (c) Write a description of “what” participants may have experienced (d) Describe “how” these experiences happened, and finally, (e). Summarize the experience, including contextual and structural descriptions of what and how it happened (pp 193-194). These interview findings will lead to further discussions with staff and, hopefully, encourage practitioners to modify their approaches to student conduct, thereby enhancing reflection and learning.

As I began to form themes and gain a general understanding of the data, I revisited the theories from the literature review to enhance the research results. As the results were unique to one specific institution, the findings were shared with that institution. This will help shape their approach to student conduct and potentially expand the opportunities for best practices in the learning process through student conduct.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

This study focused on the perceptions of students and the learning and reflection they experienced as part of participating in the student conduct process. The focus was to examine three aspects of learning, specifically their learning and reflection, based directly on the three research questions. First, examining student characteristics to see how identities impact the student conduct experience was analyzed. Second, students' idea of self-definition and how they reflect upon and feel about the student conduct process were collected. And third, the perceptions of learning at each step of the student conduct process, from before a violation occurs through the process and after it is completed, were rated.

A survey was sent to 3,657 students, with 62 students responding to the invitation to participate. From this survey, participants were asked about their interest in discussing their experiences further, and five students were subsequently interviewed in more detail about their experiences with the student conduct process. Interviewees were asked additional specific questions regarding the second and third research questions, specifically those related to self-definition and learning through each step of the student conduct process. Survey respondents were asked about a) the sources of their knowledge of university behavior expectations and conduct hearings, and b) their involvement in university-sanctioned extracurricular activities. In each case, a countable scale was constructed from the relevant items. These items are listed in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1***Items and Statistical Characteristics of Scales***

Scale	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Sources of information about conduct	In a class discussion	0.99	0.76	0	3
	Talking with a friend who experienced it				
	Reading the TU Code of Conduct				
	Living in university housing and discussing community standards.				
University activities	Student athlete	0.68	0.82	0	3
	International student				
	Member of a fraternity or sorority				
	Involved in music on campus (e.g., Band, Jazz group, Orchestra, etc.)				
	University-registered club or organization				

Research Question 1: Do Differences in Characteristics Among Students Impact Their Student Conduct Experiences with Learning and Reflection?

Differences observed between students in both the survey and interviews showed various results. The demographic information and self-reported learning of the surveyed students were compared to the more in-depth questions regarding overall learning from the interviewed students. Interviewees were able to discuss their violations, the types of sanctions they faced, and their thoughts on each of these aspects.

As mentioned above, the survey was sent to 3,657 students who had been involved in the student conduct process at some point in their college experience from 2018 to 2023. Surveys were collected over five days, which will be discussed further in the limitations section. Sixty-two students completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 2.06%. Of the survey respondents, 33 identified as male

(53.2%), and 29 identified as female (46.8%). As seen in Table 4.2, the race of survey respondents showed that the majority were White (54, 87.1%), followed by Latino/a (3, 4.8%), Asian or Asian American (2, 3.2%), Black or African American (2, 3.2%), and Multiple races (1, 1.6%).

Table 4.2

Survey Participants' Race

Race	Asian or Asian American	African American or Black	Latino/Latina	Multiple race or ethnicities	White	Total
Frequency	2 (3.2%)	2 (3.2%)	3 (4.8%)	1 (1.6%)	54 (87.1%)	62 (100%)

Respondents were asked to identify other qualities related to their college experience, such as participation in athletics, being an international student, involvement in Greek life, music, clubs and organizations, or holding an on-campus job. As shown in Table 4.3, survey participants were more likely to be student athletes, participate in a Fraternity or Sorority, be involved in music, and hold a campus job. Survey participants were equally likely to be international students or to participate in campus clubs or organizations. While athletic participation was higher among survey participants than in the general population, the difference was only slight. Student-athletes tend to be under the scrutiny of authority figures and stay on campus more often than their counterparts, which might have led to this observation. Participation in Greek life and its reputation in the media, as seen in films like *Animal House*, have been evident for generations. It is common to see in news media Greek life participants being held accountable for hosting parties, underage use of alcohol and other drugs, and having membership revoked for

hazing. It is challenging to determine whether these survey participants substantiated such claims, and further research would be necessary to draw other conclusions.

Music involvement was also higher, but this could be related to athletics, such as the traveling marching band that accompanies various athletic teams. These numbers also included the choir and orchestra, so that additional information would be needed. Finally, the number of students holding an on-campus job for survey participants was nearly 2.5 times larger than the general student population. This could be due in part to the fact that students who stay on or near campus may be more likely to hold a campus job because of their proximity to the job. Students living on campus are more likely to encounter authority figures, such as Resident Assistants or police officers affiliated with the institution, more frequently than those living at home or away from campus. Refer to Table 4.3 for the full figures and data.

Table 4.3

Survey Participants' Campus Involvement

	Student Athlete	International Student	Fraternity or Sorority membership	Involved in music on campus	University clubs or organizations	Have a job on campus	Total
Survey Participants	3 (4.8%)	3 (4.8%)	8 (12.9%)	4 (6.5%)	24 (38.7%)	19 (30.6%)	62 (100%)
All Undergrads (2023)	515 (2.11%)	863 (3.54%)	1340 (5.5%)	612 (2.51%)	9251 (37.99%)	2982 (12.25%)	24349 (100%)

Furthermore, as shown in Table 4.4, students reported the number of credits they had completed at the time of their first violation of the student code of conduct. First-year students, who have between zero and 30 credits, accounted for 62.9% of the respondents.

Table 4.4***Credits Completed as of First Conduct Violation***

Credits completed upon hearing	0-30 credits	31-60 credits	61-90 credits	Total
Frequency	39 (62.9%)	21 (33.9%)	2 (3.2%)	62 (100%)

Survey participants were asked to disclose which college their major was within, and the majority of participants came from the business school (20, 32.3%) and the College of Liberal Arts (17, 27.4%). Survey participants were significantly more likely to be from the College of Public Health. Survey participants from the business school, the College of Liberal Arts, and journalism schools showed no significant differences in participation; however, they were significantly less likely to be from the College of Science and Technology. See Table 4.5 for further details.

Table 4.5***Survey Participants by College***

College	Business	CLA	Public Health	College of Science and Technology	Communications and Journalism	Total
Survey Participants	20 (32.3%)	17 (27.4%)	12 (19.4%)	7 (11.3%)	6 (9.7%)	62 (100%)
All Undergrads (2023)	5992 (24.6%)	8706 (35.8%)	2697 (11.1%)	4924 (20.2%)	2030 (8.3%)	24349 (100%)

While the survey respondents matched the overall composition of the institution, comparisons were also made between gender and major to gather information related to the original research questions about gender and its connection to students who violate

the student code of conduct. Survey participants were generally evenly distributed by gender across majors.

Of the male survey respondents, 20 came from CLA and Public Health, accounting for 69% of male respondents. Of the female respondents, the distribution was slightly more even, with 13 from business, seven from CLA, and six from the College of Science and Technology, totaling 26, or 78% of the female respondents. While gender was not a significant factor in these survey results, it is a noteworthy finding, given research indicating that men are the majority of violators, as discussed in Chapter Three. Is this because men and women are equally likely to participate in surveys? Is this because the institution has about the same number of male and female violators? These are questions for further research, as the survey respondent data cannot directly answer these questions. See Table 4.6 for additional information.

Table 4.6

Survey Participants by College and Gender

Major by gender	Business	CLA	Public Health	College of Science and Technology	Communications and Journalism	Total
Male	7 (24.1%)	10 (34.5%)	10 (34.5%)	1 (3.4%)	1 (3.4%)	29 (100%)
Female	13 (39.4%)	7 (21.2%)	2 (6.1%)	6 (18.2%)	5 (15.2%)	33 (100%)
Total Count	20 (32.3%)	17 (27.4%)	12 (19.4%)	7 (11.3%)	6 (9.7%)	62 (100%)

After their college and gender, survey participants were also asked how many times they had participated in the conduct process. Table 4.7 provides additional

information on repeat offenders. The majority of respondents had one violation, and only a few had two or three violations.

Table 4.7

How Many Violations Participants Accrued

How many violations have you been part of?	One	Two	Three	Total
Frequency	53 (85.4%)	8 (12.9%)	1 (1.6%)	62 (100%)

Next, the demographics of interviewees were examined. All interviewees discussed conduct violations that took place during their first year in school. As shown in Table 4.8, two had two violations, while the other three had one violation each. Three of the interviewees were female, two male, and their violations differed very little. Each of them had to do with substances such as alcohol or cannabis, and one physical assault. Interestingly, two of the five interviewees had two violations each, while the three others had one violation, representing two of the eight respondents from the survey results. Interviewee demographics were also received as part of the interview process. As will be discussed further in the chapter, some of these demographics will be relevant to the learning process.

Table 4.8***Interviewee Demographics***

Interviewee	Gender	Major	Incident 1	Incident 1 Date	Incident 2	Incident 2 Date
1	Female	Anthropology	Public intoxication, transported to the hospital	Fall 2019	-	-
2	Female	Nursing	Presence of marijuana	Fall 2021	-	-
3	Female	Music Therapy	Alcohol intoxication	Fall 2019	-	-
4	Male	Marketing	Public intoxication	Fall 2021	Physical assault	Spring 2022
5	Male	Construction Engineering	Fire alarm set off by smoke in the room	Spring 2020	Smoke alarm covered during room checks	Spring 2020

Research Question 1 Summary

Overall, the survey results revealed several key insights into the characteristics of the student respondents. They were more likely to be White than non-White, first-year students in the business or CLA schools, who rated themselves as excellent or pretty good students overall, and participated in university clubs/orgs or some other facet of campus involvement. Interviewees came from diverse backgrounds, including various genders, majors, and areas of violation. Each interviewee violated policy and had their conduct experience during their first year at the institution. Although the data above are based on the frequencies of survey and interview participants, no data showed that the differences between students had an impact on their learning and reflection. Though this is opposed in other research, it will be further discussed in Chapter 5. Students' self-

definition of the learning process in relation to their conduct will be further examined, as both survey respondents and interviewees will be compared to address Research Question Two.

Research Question 2: How Does Self-Definition Among Students Affect Their Learning and Reflection?

The results in this section are organized into four themes: self-definition among survey participants, student conduct and mistake-making among interviewees, emotions and feelings associated with student conduct, and post-conduct learning and reflection. Survey respondents and interviewees had varying understandings of their own self-definition, including the learning and reflection gained in the student conduct process. While some students reflected a great deal of judgment and placed a high value on making mistakes, others took no issue and attributed violations as part of the college experience. Others also discussed that no learning took place, but later, through asking indirect questions, much more reflection and growth were achieved.

Self-Definition Among Survey Participants

Survey participants were first asked to rate themselves as students, assigning themselves a rating from 1 (excellent) to 5 (struggling). Overall, Table 4.9 shows that the majority of students self-reported being a “pretty good” student (32, 51.6%), while none reported being poor or struggling academically.

Table 4.9***Survey Participants' Self-Reported Academic Rating***

Rate yourself as a student	Excellent	Pretty good	Average	Poor	Struggling	Total
Frequency	17 (27.4%)	32 (51.6%)	13 (21%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	62 (100%)

When self-reported academic ratings are broken down by gender for these survey participants, a notable result is observed. It appears that the females in this study were more likely to self-report being academically higher achieving than the males. It is also worth noting that Reilly et al. (2022) have identified a phenomenon, which they term the "male hubris, female humility effect," in their research on self-estimated intelligence. By far, men tend to overestimate intelligence and academic achievement compared to women, who tend to under-estimate it (Reilly et al., 2022). This could certainly come into play with the following statistics on academic achievement. Out of the 29 female participants, 12 (41.4%) rated themselves as "Excellent", while five (15.2%) of the 33 male participants rated themselves "Excellent". This significant difference ($p = .05$) suggests that, at least for this group of survey participants, the opposite may have been true. While data on the students' actual GPAs and academic achievements are not part of the dataset, as well as other factors to compare actual achievement, this is merely an observation worth noting, and further research would be necessary to draw other conclusions about this observation. See Table 4.10 for additional information.

Table 4.10***Self-Reported Academic Rating by Gender***

	Excellent	Pretty Good	Average	Struggling	Not Very Good	Total
Female	12 (41.4%)	12 (41.4%)	5 (17.2%)	0	0	29 (100%)
Male	5 (15.2%)	20 (60.6%)	8 (24.2%)	0	0	33 (100%)
Total	17 (27.4%)	32 (51.6%)	13 (21.0%)	0	0	62 (100%)

$$X^2 = 5.339, p = 0.05, V = .293$$

Student self-definition was measured in several categories and compared across classes and genders. These measures included the incident number, the overall amount learned in conduct, the number of information sources about student conduct, campus jobs, and the number of university activities in which they participated. First, Table 4.11 shows these categories by year in school. Besides having more than one incident, each of these variables was statistically insignificant when compared to the year in school. It makes sense that as students progress through their college career, they would not have significant differences in learning, info sources, or knowledge of the student conduct process. The impact of having more than one incident also makes sense, as the more time a student spends at the institution, the more likely they are to have multiple violations over time. This statistic is interesting for discussion in this research.

Table 4.11***Self-Definition by Year in School***

	Year in school	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	F stat	η^2
More than one incident	2+	0.26	0.45	0	1	4.077*	0.084
	1	0.08	0.27	0	1		
How much was learned through the conduct hearing	2+	15	9.18	0	30	0.902	
	1	12.41	11.01	0	35		
Number of information sources	2+	0.91	0.6	0	2	0.316	
	1	1.03	0.84	0	3		
Number of university activities	2+	0.48	0.67	0	2	2.17	
	1	0.79	0.89	0	3		

* $\rho < .05$

The same variables were compared by gender. This time, no significance was seen in any of these variables. Gender, for instance, had no impact on whether a student had more than one incident involving student conduct, which further complicates the research showing that men are the majority violators of the student code of conduct. Self-reported learning through conduct was also similar among male and female participants, as well as the number of information sources that survey participants reported hearing about student conduct prior to their violation. Holding a campus job and involvement in university activities were also consistent across genders and did not hold any significance. While not significant, it is interesting to note that men were more likely to have multiple incidents, demonstrated greater learning, had more information sources,

were more likely to hold a campus job, and were more involved in campus activities. See Table 4.12 for further details.

Table 4.12

Factors by Gender

Factors	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	F stat
More than one incident	female	0.14	0.35	0	1	0.022
	male	0.15	0.36	0	1	
How much was learned through the conduct hearing	female	12.14	10.13	0	32	0.768
	male	14.45	10.61	0	35	
Number of information sources	female	0.93	0.7	0	2	0.262
	male	1.03	0.81	0	3	
Has a campus job	female	0.28	0.45	0	1	0.233
	male	0.33	0.48	0	1	
Number of university activities	female	0.66	0.77	0	2	0.039
	male	0.7	0.88	0	3	

Survey participants were also asked about their general knowledge of the conduct process and the specific sources from which this knowledge originated. Their familiarity, whether they had heard about it, read the student code of conduct, or known someone who had gone through the process prior to their violation, was measured. Several methods are used institutionally to inform students about their rights and the code of conduct, including orientation sessions, sending emails to student housing, and reading

the Code of Conduct. Many students reported that their familiarity came through University Housing (26, 41.9%) or by reading the code of conduct (20, 32.3%), which is recommended upon admission to the institution via online modules. See Table 4.13 for additional information.

Table 4.13

Knowledge of Student Conduct Prior to Violation

Knowledge of the conduct process before the hearing	Class discussion	Discussion with a friend	Reading the code of conduct	University Housing discussion	Orientation
Yes	1 (1.6%)	13 (21%)	20 (32.3%)	26 (41.9%)	1 (1.6%)
No	61 (98.4%)	49 (79%)	42 (66.7%)	36 (58.1%)	61 (98.4%)

While familiarity with the conduct process was not significantly related to gender, year in school, or number of incidents, one area stood out. Comparing the number of information sources and familiarity with the conduct process by race yielded a significant finding. Non-White students reported more sources than White students. This could be due in part to several factors. Non-White students had a larger number of sources from the five listed below in Table 4.14, at 1.5 sources, while Whites had .91 sources. Since race was related to the number of sources of information, it was worth speculating why this might be the case. Are Non-White students targeted with additional sources by implicit bias? Are non-Whites more likely to receive information about the conduct process from peers, professors, mentors, or other leaders? Further study will be required to make further sense of this data, but this result is certainly fascinating for discussion.

No significance was observed for more than one incident, the amount learned, holding a job on campus, or university activities.

Table 4.14

Factors by Race

Factors	Race	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	F stat	η^2
More than one incident	Non-white	0	0	0	0	1.548	
	White	0.17	0.38	0	1		
How much was learned through the conduct hearing	Non-white	12	9.86	0	25	0.158	
	White	13.57	10.51	0	35		
Number of information sources	Non-white	1.5	0.93	0	3	4.512*	0.003
	White	0.91	0.71	0	2		
Has a job	Non-white	0.38	0.52	0	1	0.197	
	White	0.3	0.46	0	1		
Number of university activities	Non-white	1	1.2	0	3	1.413	
	White	0.63	0.76	0	3		

* $p < .05$

Student Conduct and Mistake Making Among Interviewees

Interviewees were asked several follow-up questions regarding their familiarity with the office of Student Conduct, in addition to the survey results, as well as their reasoning for violating policy. None of the interviewees was directly aware of, nor had they heard of, student conduct. Through their participation in violation and conduct hearings, each individual gained a greater familiarity with the process and was able to

reflect in detail on their own violations, the conduct process, and the reflection and learning that followed.

Regardless of their familiarity with student conduct, students were then asked if they understood the decision-making process involved in deciding to violate the policy. Some interviewees reflected that they were involved in drinking underage, specifically to fit in or to feel part of the group. When reflecting on their reason for drinking underage, Interviewee 1 said:

But it was definitely a combination of many things. Like, I wanted my friends to think I was cool, I wanted to like, be more confident to make new friends. I also was just completely miserable as a human being.

Interviewees 1 and 3 seemed to have a grasp of their voluntary participation in underage drinking. While various factors may have contributed to the act of drinking, both individuals seemed to understand how their actions impacted themselves, the people involved, including other participants, and the parties involved, as well as their hearing officers. In contrast, Interviewees 2, 4, and 5 had different experiences that reflected why they initially violated the policy.

Interviewee 2 specifically was present for a violation they did not violate, but spoke to the Resident Assistant (RA), who stopped by while the person smoking cannabis hid in the bathroom. Their reasoning for violating the 'presence of cannabis' policy was to fall in line with what they were doing, as well as peer pressure. Similarly, Interviewee 5 had been involved in a smoking cannabis related infraction that set off the fire alarm after cannabis was consumed in their room. This infraction led to their second violation, which occurred during a room check when it was discovered that the fire alarm had been covered with a bag. Upon being asked about their reasoning, Interviewee 5 stated that

their response to getting in trouble a second time was an assumed prevention to avoid getting caught again, and did not think it would be the cause of a second incident.

Lastly, Interviewee 4 discussed two incidents where they reported public intoxication, then being provoked into a fight during two separate incidents, as noted in Table 4.2. No reflection was noted by Interviewee 4 on why they had decided to be intoxicated in public with an open container. Still, in other reflections, it was noted that drinking underage was part of the college experience. As for the physical assault, Interviewee 4 reflected that they felt provoked into it, giving a sense of separation from the responsibility for their own actions, and that the policies of the institution were a barrier to their success, not their own actions.

When asked about the physical assault of their roommate and what led to it, Interviewee 4 stated they were provoked into the fight and continued to justify their actions were retaliatory, and that their actions were in response to their roommate provoking them. When asked a follow-up on what might have further led to the fight or their response to being provoked, Interviewee 4 further described the justification for their actions, and that their roommate and the institution's policies were barriers to their experience, stating:

I'm not one to, you know, start a fight without anything like provoking me, and what provoked me was my roommate continuously egging me on, and he finally punched me in the face. I thought I knew how I acted was what you know, how dare I psych him out? I don't want to sound cocky, but teaching him a lesson is like this: if you poke the bear, the bear will come back and poke you. I just thought that I acted in a way that was fine and that what I've grown up knowing as okay was because I was provoked, but clearly, that's not the case. I didn't see it that way, so yeah.

Although their experiences differed in several ways, such as peer pressure, lack of justification, provocation, or preventing further violations, Interviewees 2, 4, and 5 shared

a similar experience in that the consequences of their violations acted as a barrier to possible learning and reflection. Is it possible that students who are unable to take responsibility for their actions can also reflect on the learning process?

Emotion and Feelings Tied to Student Conduct

The following several questions addressed feelings related to the hearing process and what interviewees learned about themselves. As will be further examined in the following research question regarding the physical steps of the conduct process, the hearing itself might be one of the most formal steps in the process, but not one where students felt pressure or disdain after experiencing it. Interviewees reflected that their experiences in the hearing made them feel relieved, confirmed unanswered questions that had been lingering for them, or even justified the feelings of fear or anxiety they had brought into the hearing. Interviewee 3 specifically remembered that their roommate asked them how the hearing went, and they responded that it went much better than they had imagined, since they thought they would be suspended from the institution.

Although their violation typically comes with fines, probation, and educational sanctions, Interviewee 3 experienced the fear of being removed from the institution for drinking underage. This fear was quickly alleviated during the hearing when the clarification of the violation and the expected sanctions was discussed. Similar to Interviewee 3, Interviewee 1 had a similar perception regarding how student conduct would treat them:

I don't know. I mean, that it wasn't like a trial was nice. Like, I went in really scared of what would happen, it felt bad, like, but it wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be in that office... I mean, I didn't hurt anybody; I broke the rules, but I made a mistake. I didn't hurt anyone but myself, so the idea that it could have been something that has like serious, serious consequences, like that, it's like I don't know. And I think that, like

instinctively kind of when like as someone is working in student conduct, you're gonna treat somebody differently who comes in, who just got too drunk and could have hurt themselves, as you are with someone who did something bad to another person. You're gonna inherently treat them differently.

While the reasons for anxiety and stress may have come from different sources, the process of going through the hearing was helpful, relieving, and not as negative as they expected. What could lead students to feel this way about the hearing process? How might administrators be able to ease this sense of anxiety before a hearing, or is a bit of unease regarding the conduct process also crucial for learning and reflection?

Interviewees were asked about how they had processed their thoughts and feelings about the entire student conduct process, and how they felt about achieving closure or lingering feelings towards it. Interviewees were also asked how they have been able to discuss this with their family or peers. Overall, interviewees reported a sense of finality and closure from their student conduct process, except when an ongoing sanction or outcome differed from what they thought was fair or proper. Interviewees 1, 3, and 5 reported a sense of closure and finality regarding the conduct process. Each of these interviewees reported previously feeling that the conduct process was fair, they felt listened to in the hearing, and the sanctions matched their violations. Another commonality among these three interviewees was that each assumed the sanctions and/or the hearing process would be much more severe than they actually were. Interviewee 5 reflected that the hearing was “Super fair, I thought I was going to be in way more trouble or kicked out of the dorms,” when asked about the fairness of the hearing and sanctioning process.

Interviewee 2 had initially thought about lingering feelings they had about conduct, but only while they lived on campus in the dorms. They suggested that after they moved off campus, they felt much more at ease about their conduct, possibly because the nature of their violation involved being in the presence of someone else who had also violated policy. Interviewee 2 expressed that they had “lingering feelings for a little while until I left the dorm and moved off campus, then I had closure from it” when discussing the conduct process as a whole. Interviewee 4 had lingering feelings for several reasons. They reported that the conduct process seemed biased against them in favor of their roommate and that the standards used by student conduct to determine responsibility were not practical guidelines. Their happiness that the process was over was separate from their reflections on lingering feelings about how the process went.

Interviewee 4 said:

One hundred percent still have lingering feelings towards the process because it took away, you know, a semester of my education. So obviously I don't like it, but I was more happy to know that it was over and I could go on with my life, if I had to go on with my life, but also, then again, it was just, it took away a whole semester of my life and that's something I can't get back.

Post-Conduct Learning and Reflection

As interviewees were asked to reflect on their lingering feelings or sense of closure regarding the conduct process, they were also asked about how they had processed their emotions with others as a way to seek support and process their feelings. All of the interviewees had discussed the incident with others. Interviewees 1, 3, and 4 had discussed with parents and family; each of these was alcohol or physical assault related violations. Interviewees 2 and 5 discussed the incident with those present, making it a reflective experience, and joked about it with each other. Interviewees 2 and 5 were

found in violation of the presence of cannabis, as well as covering their fire alarm to smoke cannabis, some of the lowest-level violations there are at the institution.

Interviewee 3 reflected that it is an annual tradition for the family to reflect upon their violation, saying that everyone reminds them around Labor Day each year to reflect upon the violation and how far they have come since. Interviewee 3 remembers it jokingly now, but recalls that it was a very severe situation at the time.

The last interview questions pertained to the self-definition of what the interviewees felt they had learned about themselves by going through the entire conduct process. This question was asked in various ways, depending on the conversation and the point at which the interview had just concluded, as it was one of the last questions. It is essential to note that, prior to this, the questions focused on the conduct process and procedures. A key theme was that interviewees reflected on learning more about their own flaws, including self-judgment and impulse control, as well as strategies for avoiding mistakes in the future.

The first theme of learning originated from several interviewees and their self-assessed judgments of themselves and their mistake-making. Particularly for all interviewees, substance use for alcohol or cannabis was the primary source of each of these five violations, and judgment from themselves regarding these violations was a consistent reflection. Interviewee 3 disclosed that they learned “not to be stupid about it,” implying that being caught was a result of their own tactics or an attempt to drink in secret that was somehow foiled. Similarly, attributing the behavior as “stupid” regarding both the behavior itself as well as the act of being caught with alcohol, Interviewee 1 said

their biggest lessons were to “Act sober in the residence halls, don’t drink as much, and drink in moderation if you’re going to drink at all”.

It seemed that a common theme was the discovery of a violation was often seen as a result of the student being “dumb” or even “stupid,” and, as mentioned before, the consumption of alcohol or illegal substances was part of the college experience. Especially given the assumption that it is part of what 18-year-olds do, Interviewee 4 suggested that 18-year-olds are known for drinking and being stupid on college campuses. The assumptions from interviewees and their ability to reflect in the individual interviews about their judgment of themselves in the violation were that “college students drink underage and smoke cannabis”. Whether this behavior is considered “stupid” or “dumb” depends on whether they are caught in that behavior or not. However, interviewees realized their actions were against policy, illegal, or wrong in the moments they were violating the policy. The next theme of overall learning stemmed from interviewees' ability to attribute their own characteristics to themselves.

The second theme interviewees discussed their grit, character, and resilience. This was attributed to the interviewees' ability to complete sanctions, the achievements they made after the violation, or how they were able to attribute their own success to part of their personal self-definition. In particular, each interviewee reflected at some point about their personal characteristics as a marker of their success. Interviewee 1 reflected that they learned substance use started at 14 years old and stopped at age 20. Interviewee 1 realized they had a strong support system to help them through the process of using and discontinuing its use.

Support structures and being able to persist through adversity with those support structures were a helpful reflection for Interviewee 1 in understanding how they got through the process of their alcohol incident. Similarly, Interviewee 3 disclosed part of the learning they experienced related to their parent, who had passed away. Interviewee 3 said that their comparison to their father in their hearing came up, and they used it as a wakeup call not to follow the same path toward alcohol dependence.

As a powerful reflection of how support structures related to parents or how students are capable of doing things on their own, it is worth noting that the interviewees often related their learning to their relationships with others. After the interview was almost completed, Interviewee 2 was also asked about how their ideas of peer pressure influenced their self-perception. They disclosed:

I had no idea how that was going to be or anything or what it really even entailed. But I also learned about myself a little bit and what I don't feel comfortable with and what I do. I've just learned that I don't want to be friends with people who put me under that kind of pressure. I'm a good person; it feels good to have no weight on your shoulders, no secrets to hide, or no lies to tell.

The weight of doing what is right or doing what everyone else is doing in the moment was a struggle for Interviewee 2. While the others in the room were also covering for the students who were smoking cannabis, Interviewee 2 went along with the pressures of what the entire room was doing. Only in the interview did Interviewee 2 realize that they had, in fact, separated themselves from the group in their decision-making process. Interviewee 4 also had a moment of insight with their final thoughts in the interview, reflecting that they felt they were better prepared for hard times in their life after going through the conduct process. Although they faced adversity and were delayed

in their college career for a year, they know that they can adequately defend themselves and do more than work an hourly job for their whole life after graduation.

Although this learning came at the cost of a temporary suspension from college for a year, it sparked their drive and motivation to return to college after a year away, ready to complete their coursework and get back on track, which was about to occur at the time of the interview.

Research Question 2 Summary

In summary, differences in self-definition are a crucial factor in how students perceive learning and reflection in relation to their conduct. First, it was observed that a few survey participants were familiar with the Student Conduct Office and its role, while none of the interviewees had any prior knowledge. While no statistical significance was observed regarding race, gender, number of credits completed, or number of information sources, a statistically significant difference was observed between information sources and race. Whites were less likely to have multiple information sources than non-Whites. The reasons policies were violated were discussed next, with answers varying between making a decision to violate the policy, feeling pressured, and being provoked.

The feelings attributed to the hearing process between all interviewees involved stress relief and reassurance. There were widespread assumptions that the conduct process was unnecessarily formal and punitive, or even that sanctions for low-level infractions could include expulsion. The dichotomy of assumptions about what could happen in reality led to these positive responses. Interviewees discussed whether they had discussed the incident with others and their lingering feelings towards the entire process.

While most had closure, the only interviewee who did not was still in their suspension period, and sanctions were not yet fully completed. While they had lingering negative feelings, they were also looking forward to resuming their studies at the institution later that Fall.

Interviewees then reflected upon their discussions with others and what they learned about themselves. Each interviewee had discussed the incident with others, saying that either a parent, family member, or their roommates and friends who were present were helpful partners to discuss the situation with. One interviewee discussed their family as part of their support structure and attributed their high sense of accomplishment, character, and grit to their family. Each of the four other interviewees discussed how it was helpful to process or make fun of the conduct meetings in their reflections on learning. The process for each interviewee to understand that conduct is part of the college experience, or that students make mistakes, was also a common theme. Interviewees were able to organize their reflections around conduct as a blip in their experiences, something they grew from and learned from, and did not feel shame, guilt, or anger during their interview. The following research question will examine each aspect of the student conduct process. These will be discussed in their procedural order from the perspective of both interviewees and survey respondents.

Research Question 3: In What Ways are the Student Conduct Hearing Stages Related to Student Learning and Reflection?

The results in this section are organized into two themes: survey participant learning through student conduct and interviewee learning through student conduct. Each aspect of the student conduct process was investigated in further detail in both the survey and interviews. Interviewees were asked to discuss their thoughts on what they learned at

each stage of the conduct process, and a Likert scale rating was provided for each area of the conduct process in the survey. The stages of the student conduct process are pre-violation, during the violation, intervention, notification to schedule a hearing, conduct of the hearing, findings and sanctions, completion of the sanction, and reflection after sanction completion. Observations of these stages were used to compare and contrast how students formalized their self-reported reflections on the student conduct process and identify which stage is most conducive to learning and reflection.

Survey Participant Learning Through Student Conduct

Pre-violation learning is defined in this dissertation as the learning that happens before a violation occurs and is partially a result of the institution informing students of the student code of conduct. Upon admission, students attending Atlantic University are required to complete three online modules to become familiar with alcohol education, university inclusion, Title IX resources, and the associated office. Of the survey respondents, 32 (51.6%) reported that these online modules, as part of the pre-violation learning, resulted in no learning, 27.4% reported that some learning, 16.1% reported a moderate amount, 4.8% reported a great deal, and 0% reported the most learning.

Next, learning while violating policy was examined as two separate parts: first, from their own thoughts on violating policy, then on being caught by an authority figure. Of the survey respondents, 34 (54.8%) stated that the violation resulted in no learning. Overall, 98.4% of student respondents selected the middle answer, “moderate amount” or lower, for this question. This self-determination of knowing right from wrong changes significantly once an authority figure is present during the violation.

While students may have realized what they were doing was wrong, or thought they would not be caught, it is the actual act of being caught by an authority figure that marks the beginning of learning for survey participants. For the first time in the survey, regarding question 20 and the stages of learning through student conduct, a notable increase in data is observed. Of the survey respondents, 24 (38.7%) reported moderate to the most learning as a result of being caught by an authority figure. Without any formal instruction, discussion, or opportunity for reflection, the act of being caught violating policy had a significant impact on student learning. This could be one opportunity for future discussion in Chapter Five.

Survey participants were then asked to rate their learning experience, including being sent their hearing notice, as well as the actual hearing they held with a hearing officer. Continuing the trend from the previous section, question 20, 36 respondents (58.1%) reported some to the most learning for scheduling their hearing. In comparison, 37 respondents (59.7%) reported some to the most learning from their actual hearing. After being caught, this was the most noteworthy continuation of learning. An authority figure sending them an email and putting them on notice that they must schedule a hearing, as well as participating in the actual hearing, both had high results when students engaged in reflection and learning. Three participants noted that they learned the most from scheduling their hearing, and two participants noted that they learned the most from their conduct hearing. Several others noted that these two aspects of the student conduct process had some to a great deal of learning. After the hearing notice and holding the conduct hearing, sanctions were discussed. This process includes being found responsible and having sanctions assigned to a student based on their violation. Students are then

given a timeline upon which to complete sanctions, or sanctions will expire after a specified timeframe, such as for probation.

Among the survey questions, participants were asked to rate their learning from being assigned sanctions, as well as completing and turning in their sanctions. For both, the results were similar. For both being assigned and completing sanctions, 29 student respondents, or 53.2% reported some to the most learning. While this is another dip in overall learning compared to some previous questions, the distribution of learning is more evenly spread among the other ratings. For both of these questions, five respondents noted that it was the section that offered the most learning. Perhaps students in the survey who could not ask clarifying questions felt that their sanctions were fair or provided a good reminder of the policy or guidelines.

After being asked about each aspect of the student conduct process, survey participants were asked to reflect on the overall learning and experience they had after each stage of the process was completed. This could be about how they changed their behaviors, or even how they navigated their time in college differently. For survey participants, reflection after sanction completion had the most respondents selecting “the most learning.” In the final section of question 20, a total of eight respondents noted that post-sanction and conduct completion offered the most learning, or 12.9% of respondents. While 26 participants (41.9%) still stated that no learning occurred in their reflections after sanctions were complete, it is worth noting that this is a higher rating than each of the other questions. Is this due to participants’ relief to be done with the process? Is it due to the lower amount of stress and

lingering feelings to allow for learning to occur? Additional information based on survey participants can be found in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15

Learning at Each Stage of Student Conduct

	Pre Violation	During the violation	Intervention	Need to schedule a hearing	Holding the hearing	Findings and sanctions	Sanction completion	Reflection after sanction completion
No learning	32 (51.6%)	34 (54.8%)	25 (40.3%)	26 (41.9%)	25 (40.3%)	29 (46.8%)	29 (46.8%)	26 (41.9%)
Some learning	17 (27.4%)	14 (22.6%)	13 (21.0%)	11 (17.7%)	11 (17.7%)	11 (17.7%)	14 (22.6%)	9 (14.5%)
A moderate amount of learning	10 (16.1%)	13 (21.0%)	7 (11.3%)	9 (14.5%)	11 (17.7%)	10 (16.1%)	9 (14.5%)	10 (16.1%)
A great deal of learning	3 (4.8%)	1 (1.6%)	12 (19.4%)	13 (21.0%)	13 (21.0%)	7 (11.3%)	5 (8.1%)	9 (14.5%)
The most learning	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (8.1%)	3 (4.8%)	2 (3.2%)	5 (8.1%)	5 (8.1%)	8 (12.9%)

Overall, survey respondents reported that their ability to reflect after all sanctions were completed, followed by the intervention of authority figures, were the two highest points throughout the conduct process geared towards their own learning. These two stages served as stepping stones to better understand the interview data and identify which stages interviewees found most helpful for their growth, reflection, and learning.

Interviewee Learning Through Student Conduct

In their reflections on pre-violation education, interviewees noted that it was a requirement for admission to Atlantic University, but they did not gain much learning from it. When asked what they learned, Interviewee 5 said, “Not much, I guess I learned more from my parents and peers”. Overall, the interviewees agreed that pre-violation learning was a requirement and nothing more, and that learning was more effectively received from parents, peers, or through their high school experiences. Interviewee 4 agreed, saying:

Yes, it was really just a procedure that I had to go through to attend college. I didn't really ever, um, take too much time to do them. Cause I remember it was, it was COVID. I was sitting at my house, and I completed the module for about 30 minutes, and then I was done with it. And it was just something that I had to get done with so I could attend (Atlantic University).

In a similar realization of learning during the violation stage of conduct, interviewees reflected on knowing that what they were doing was wrong or feeling pressured by their peers. Interviewee 5 said they didn't realize their violation was in the code of conduct, but “I knew it wasn't the right thing to do”. Although they still had no one to hold them accountable, all interviewees understood that what they

were doing was wrong or directly related to a violation of the student code of conduct.

Next, interviewees were asked about being caught by an authority figure. Similar to survey participants, interviewees reflected upon their embarrassment and possible connection to learning spiking during this intervention. Interviewee 3 in particular reflected that the act of being caught throwing up in the lobby of their residence hall was an embarrassment that stuck with them for a long time. Beyond their embarrassment, they recalled how helpful it was that their friends stuck with them to support them; however, the act of being caught had a severely impactful effect on the learning process. The theme of embarrassment during intervention continues into the next phase, which included the anxiety of having to participate in a conduct hearing. Interviewee 3 said:

So I walked into that meeting with a lot of anxiety. I was like, I'm going to get kicked out of (Atlantic University). And then I walked out, thinking, 'Okay, yeah, I did something stupid.' But there's someone here who doesn't just see me as this stupid thing that I did, and who still feels like in my back. Yeah. I remember that they had fidget toys and liked to have something in their hands, which can definitely take away some of the anxiety.

Dissecting the hearing further, interviewees were asked if they had enough time to feel listened to and heard, and were also encouraged to reflect on their experiences. Interviewee 5 said that they had plenty of time to discuss the situation and felt like it was “like a court session”. Furthermore, Interviewee 5 recalled thinking that after their rights were explained, they were asked several questions and remembered their hearing officer being friendly and patient with the story they told from their perspective regarding the incident.

While the specific things being learned were not explicitly reflected in the interviews, having a sense of a helpful and informative hearing officer made the interviewees feel comfortable and at ease, compared to the anxiety they felt when receiving their letter and being put on notice that they had a hearing. This could align with the survey respondents' learning experiences during their notice of a hearing and participation in the actual hearing. Interviewee 2 also had similar reflections on the conduct process, stating that their hearing officer was very friendly, explained the steps, and asked Interviewee 2 to recount what had happened. Interviewee 2 reiterated that they were asked follow-up questions and felt that they were very informed about how to lead the meeting and fully understood the conduct hearing process. Interviewee 2 also stated that they felt very comfortable during the hearing, which contributed to their positive outlook on the experience.

Although feelings of anxiety about being 'put on notice' for a hearing, versus the ease and relief of the actual hearing, were opposites in nature, both questions suggested that learning took place from the interviewees. Perhaps feelings of stress or relaxation are not directly related to students' thoughts on learning, or different learning processes are taking place in each case? Some of the interviewees certainly had several more nuanced observations about what they learned from being assigned and completing sanctions.

Interviewees reflected that receiving and completing sanctions was unhelpful in a similar way to the required pre-violation education. Educational sanctions in particular were seen as busy work, "just a good reminder", or a waste of their time. Interviewee 5 was asked about their feelings about having to write a reflection essay

for their violation, and they remembered feeling like it was nothing at all. Similarly, Interviewee 2 thought more about their experience and was happy that they were given the opportunity to reflect on their violation in the educational sanction, which was an essay. Interviewee 2 remembered thinking about having friends around them who didn't make them feel pressured to make poor decisions, as well as being around people with whom they didn't have to monitor or second-guess.

Although educational sanctions were mainly seen as a good reminder or busy work, it appears that these reflection essays, modules, and classroom-style reflections were either helpful or neutral in promoting student learning. Interviewees were also reflective about punitive sanctions such as probation, fines, and suspension from the institution. Interviewee 1 said:

I didn't really learn anything from the punitive sanctions. It was more like when I was hammering home the shame of it and being pissed off that it all happened. You know what I mean? I'm not sure how to describe it. It was more like the letter home that was bad for me.

Reflecting that punitive sanctions did not help to educate them was common among interviewees. An interesting reflection also came from Interviewee 3 regarding fines and probation. They reflected that probation was a status on their file, but it meant little else, and the fine seemed reasonable; however, neither taught them anything of value. Interviewee 3 recalled thinking that paying a \$250 fine for their personal finances was insignificant, as well as their probation status resulting from the hearing. Interviewee 3 was able to reflect that although the fine was mostly meaningless for them, it could be more difficult for another student in a different financial situation. This led them to question whether a sliding scale of affording the sanctions was in place for students, which it is not.

When asked about the process of reflection and learning after all sanctions were completed, interviewees had various observations. Each interviewee shared various insights, including their ability to persist through challenging situations and learn from mistakes. Some even discussed that it was an annual tradition to laugh at the incident that had occurred with family members. Interviewee 3 reflected that the process itself, rather than the sanctions, was the most critical factor in their learning and reflection. Interviewee 4 had similar reflective moments, discussing their upbringing, character, and even challenging their own privilege. Interviewee 4 had this to say:

I learned that I can handle hard times. I've had a relatively easy life, so going through this was definitely different for me, and I'm just happy to know that I can face some adversity, especially when I'm about to be kicked out of college. I know I can put my foot down, I know I can do more than work at a bar my whole life.

Interviewee 3 said they learned about themselves through the process of student conduct. Interviewee 3 recalled that they have a family history with alcohol and substances, and the conduct helped them learn that the reflection and learning they have done outside the conduct process was much more impactful than the sanctions themselves. Interviewee 3 realized that they had an easier time with their conduct experience because of the support and lessons their family provided.

While reflecting on their suspension from the institution, Interviewee 4 was able to step back to see the full scale of the impact conduct had on their college experience. This was an essential reflection for them, which they also included as part of the reason for conducting the research interview. Since they did not feel the

process was fair or that they had been listened to, they wanted to discuss the process with someone as part of their own healing and reflection.

A majority of the interviewees also reported similar results to those of the survey participants. Interviewees 1, 3, and 5 each reflected that being caught and documented while violating policy was the most impactful. Interviewee 5 stated they were initially in shock and were very worried prior to the hearing. Interviewee 5 revealed how relieved they felt when the sanction was only a reflection essay.

The feelings of shock and being in a situation where they were being documented also arose for Interviewee 3. When asked which aspect of student conduct had the most impact on learning, Interviewee 3 said it was either the intervention or being caught. They, too, felt that the hearing was not as big a deal and felt supported and encouraged. Interviewee 3 also discussed how their situation might have been worse, but they were just embarrassed about it. Interviewee 1 reflected on the experience of being caught while they were also transported to the hospital, and Interviewee 3 was not. They had similar experiences about which aspect of student conduct taught them the most.

While the other two interviewees did not agree that being caught and the resulting violation was the most critical learning experience, they did agree that the sanctions they received were the most effective in teaching them a lesson. Interviewee 2 stated that it was an opportunity for the institution to teach them something. Interviewee 2 said that their sanctions were tailored toward their unique situation and felt they were helpful in their learning as well. Interviewee 2 had one of the lowest levels of violations and reflected that sanctioning had the most learning. Is it possible this is because they were present in a room with others who were smoking, so they did not feel the impact of being

caught like the other three did? Perhaps it had to do with the result of the sanctions being a polite reminder of the rules? In the same vein, Interviewee 4 had the following to say:

I'd probably say the sanctions and findings because I looked at this whole sheet, piled up this whole email about what I had to do, and it was really just like, wow, like I have to do all this stuff before I have to pick classes. This is insane. I think that sanctions and findings are what I would say were the most significant learning experiences for me.

Dissimilar to Interviewee 2, Interviewee 4 had one of the most severe types of conduct violations for physical assault, which was the second incident they had, and took up the majority of the interview. Although they discussed their public intoxication, suspension from the institution, and a list of several sanctions to complete, it was their most impactful learning experience. In contrast to participant two, this may be because they were involved in a fistfight that was reported by the other party several days later, so nobody caught them in the act. Perhaps it is due to the severity of the sanctions, including a one-year suspension from the institution.

Summary

This chapter discussed the study and findings. The mixed methods approach facilitated discussions of significant generalizations about how students at Atlantic University understand the learning process behind student conduct, allowing interviewees to fill in the details and address the gaps. The survey data provided information on student demographics for participants, including self-reported data on learning through the student conduct process. Quantitative data illustrated that participants rated themselves as good students and were likely to be White, male, and first-year students at the time of their violation. Additionally, the data showed that students primarily formalized their learning in two areas of the student conduct

process. First, students rated the final stage, or reflection and learning that takes place after sanctions are completed, as the highest stage for learning. Survey participants overall had rated most areas of the student conduct process as “no learning”; however, this stage had the highest rating among them all. The next highest rating went to the stage for intervention, or being caught violating policy. This meant that, after everything is completed and caught by an authority figure, being caught is the second most impactful stage of the student conduct process for learning, according to survey participants.

The qualitative data then highlighted gaps in the quantitative data and helped to paint a more specific picture of how students understood their conduct experiences. Student interviewees experienced varying degrees of violations from the presence of cannabis, including a fire alarm, alcohol consumption, as well as a physical assault. Interviewees were all in their first year of instruction at the time of their violations; two of them had two violations, while the other three had only one. Each interviewee discussed their thoughts on their self-definition and reflections on learning through the student conduct stages. Overall, interviewees felt that the student conduct process was fair, as they felt heard and listened to, and only had lingering feelings or negativity about the process if their sanctions were still pending. Interviewees generally held an understanding that the most learning came from being caught by an authority figure or the sanctions they had to face. The two students who indicated sanctions were the most impactful for learning were both the most severe and the least severe of the interviewees, which was a fascinating discovery. Each of

the other three had been able to learn and reflect the most after completing the sanction.

Overall, the quantitative and qualitative data worked together to provide a clearer picture of student learning through the stages of the student conduct process. Survey participants and interviewees shared similar thoughts on which stages were most primed for learning, and both sets of data established a foundation for further discussion on how this might impact best practices, student success, future research, and student conduct procedures.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Summary of the Study

This study was conducted at a public urban university on the East Coast of the United States. The student population studied consisted of undergraduate students who had experienced a violation of the student code of conduct and had undergone the student conduct process.

This study focused on the perceptions of students and the learning and reflection they experienced as part of participating in the student conduct process. The focus was to examine three aspects of learning regarding their learning and reflection: First, student characteristics to see how student identities impact their student conduct experience; Second, their idea of self-definition and how they reflect upon and feel about the student conduct process; And third, rating the perceptions of learning at each step of the student conduct process from before a violation occurs, through the process, and after the process is completed.

A survey was sent to 3,657 students, with a total of 62 students participating. From this survey, participants were asked about their interest in discussing their experiences further, and five students were subsequently interviewed in more detail about their experiences with the student conduct process. Interviewees were asked additional specific questions regarding the second and third research questions, specifically those related to self-definition and learning through each step of the student conduct process.

Summary of the Findings

This study, based on survey and interview data, provided answers to three research questions. Quantitative data indicated that participants were likely to be White, male, and in their first year of college at the time of their violations. Additionally, data showed that students were most likely to formalize their learning in two areas of the student conduct process. One was the final stage of the student code of conduct process, which includes the student's reflection and learning that occurs after all sanctions are complete. The second stage was intervention, or being caught in the act of violating the student code of conduct by an authority figure. While these two areas were rated the highest for learning by survey participants, interviewees provided similar answers.

Qualitative data showed that while interviewees experienced varying degrees of violations from the presence of cannabis, one of the lower violations, to physical assault, one of the higher violations, they also held that the most learning came from the act of being caught violating policy. Overall, these data together painted a picture of the characteristics, self-definition, and conduct stages that relate to learning through the student conduct process.

The findings from this study directly connect to the theory of cultural capital and marginality, as well as the concept of mattering. Interviewees disclosed that their actions were sometimes not fully their own, and social pressures influenced their choices and actions. Several interviewees mentioned that they knew their choices were not the best, but attributed this to the college experience. This experience can be explained through the concept of cultural capital, as students feel pressure to fit in, challenge one another, and accrue more cultural resources, sometimes through acting out or violating campus

policies. Marginality and mattering can also directly tie to how interviewees disclosed that their choices were not entirely their own. Perhaps students violated the policy for reasons they were unaware of or unable to articulate for this research. The sense of wanting to be seen and matter to their peers, along with receiving positive reinforcement, aligns with the interviewees' reflections on their actions.

The opportunities identified by other research also align with those presented in this study. The conduct process is rigid and structured to prevent bias; however, it is clear that students are learning in multiple ways across various aspects of the student conduct process. Research that shows the conduct process is ripe with opportunities for growth, challenge, reflection, change, and education is also apparent from this research. Each interviewee reflected that they learned several things from the process, whether it was from a staff member, their peers, themselves, or another aspect of the process. Practitioners can learn from this alignment to replicate what this and other research have shown: that student conduct is an appropriate setting for students to reflect on and grow from their mistakes.

Limitations and Other Issues

First, this study was conducted at a single institution on the United States East Coast, so generalizations to student populations beyond this institution may be challenging to assume without research replication elsewhere. The scope of students studied was another limitation. While 3,657 students were emailed to participate in the research survey, only 62 students responded, resulting in a response rate of 1.69%. This was also impacted by the research being related to a sensitive and private subject that students may not have wanted to discuss thoroughly with a stranger,

had negative lasting feelings, or had left the institution at the time of outreach, having graduated. Students may experience feelings of shame or guilt regarding the student conduct process, as discussed in the findings. Although the survey had a low response rate, it is worth noting that it was open for only five days. While it is a limitation, it is also worth noting that this topic may be challenging to complete via a survey with little or no benefit to the participants themselves. Student participants reported feeling anxiety, irritability, frustration, and other negative feelings related to their experiences going through the student conduct process.

Other limitations include difficulty with the approval process. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) initially had reservations about approving this research for a calendar year. Assumptions that this research included health-based screening, counseling, or psychological distress were factors in these apprehensions. After two hearings to discuss the edits on research approvals, and a calendar year later, the research was approved, but not before being asked to contact the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to verify that the research did not include a health-based intervention.

Based on the literature review, which shows that men are by far the majority violators of the student code of conduct (Harper et al., 2005), this research found that the survey respondents were comprised of 47% male and 53% female identified students, indicating an opposite trend. While 55% of undergraduate students at the institution are female and 44% are male, the survey respondents seem to align more closely with the institution's gender breakdown, rather than men being the majority violators. Perhaps this is due to the survey respondents' likelihood of completing an evaluation of their experiences related to student conduct and gender. Perhaps this is related to the research

showing that men experience shame, guilt, and embarrassment when making mistakes, or perhaps it is something else. Further research on student conduct violations by gender will be necessary to inform decisions on best practices for addressing these issues.

Lastly, participants were initially intended to be a general population of students for the survey instrument, and then male students interested in further research would be identified for individual interviews. Due to the limited number of participants and the other limitations listed above, five participants, both male and female, were recruited to participate in individual interviews. The intent was to explore how men experience issues surrounding hypermasculinity and habitus, in order to investigate further the research mentioned in the literature review. Future research would benefit from a larger sample of survey participants from multiple institutions to facilitate the identification of male students for individual interviews.

Implications for Student Conduct

In this study, several suggestions were received from interviewees regarding the student conduct process. These suggestions can be categorized into three main areas: email notices, conducting hearings, and reflection after sanction completion. First, the email notices that students receive were a topic of discussion for several interviewees. They reported feeling uneasy about the formality of the hearing notice, as well as a sense of urgency in wanting to know exactly what the process will include and exclude. While the hearing itself is where students will sit with a conduct administrator to discuss, an explanation of what to expect could be helpful in addition to a less formal email notice. Compared to the sense of ease that comes with being assigned complete pre-violation educational modules, the hearing notice and setting set a very different tone for students

receiving formal notices. Students noted this dissonance to escalate their sense of urgency, fear, and anxiety with the conduct process.

Consistency and a non-biased process are typically the reasons behind having letters as a set standard for all conduct hearing types; similarly, an explanation of what to expect during the hearing could also be provided. While this information can be found in full on most institutions' websites, much like a code of conduct, the legalese and accessibility to students are sometimes complex and nuanced. Can we expect students to read a document that is 30 pages or more, outlining their rights and responsibilities? Could a supplemental example of what a typical hearing or board includes be helpful? This research suggests that a concise version of both could be beneficial to send to students participating in the hearing process to address fears and anxiety associated with the process.

It is also worth noting that the student conduct process is a last resort. While students may indeed violate the student code of conduct, administrators hope to inform the student body and keep the number of violations to a minimum. Pre-violation education, focusing on the overlap between the Office of Student Conduct and the Student Code of Conduct, as well as how to participate in activities that align with these guidelines and achieve a promising college career, should be explored further. It is the role of the student conduct and other offices to ensure that students are aware of the policy and prevent them from violating it. This should be a focus once students are called into a hearing for their mistakes and violations of the student code of conduct. Making educational efforts prior to violations educational, accessible, engaging, and memorable

will be a challenge due to the limitations mentioned with other pre-violation educational materials.

Implications for Conduct Hearings and Hearing Officers

After the hearing notice is sent out, the actual hearing is another setting where hearing officers have a captive audience to discuss the situation that occurred. While this is another setting guided by documents to ensure consistent and unbiased processes for students, hearing officers may differ in their approach to tone, examples, and explaining their approach to student conduct and education, among other aspects. There is a great opportunity and obligation then to hearing officers to help make the conduct hearing setting a positive one for students, which seems to have happened with most interviewees. While interviewees expressed relief and positivity regarding their hearing and the hearing officer, it was a result of their questions being answered, seeing that the process was not as formal as they had expected, or the outcome being less severe than they had assumed it would be.

Hearing officers should take advantage of this opportunity to show patience and grace with students, ensuring they ask questions they have about the process and are prompted to do so multiple times. Additionally, they may want to prompt students to reiterate what they understand or do not understand about the process as their hearing officer completes each step. This could provide students with a better opportunity to ask questions that might not be addressed in the usual conduct process, and could continue to help alleviate fears, anxiety, or negative feelings about the conduct process altogether.

After students completed sanctions, this was another area where both interviewees and survey participants agreed that learning could occur. While the student conduct

officer's role is fulfilled after assigning sanctions and ensuring they are completed, there is perhaps another opportunity to help facilitate growth and learning. Atlantic University specifically attempted to conduct post-conduct surveys, asking for feedback that was not completed initially in high numbers, for example. However, perhaps a different approach could be possible. Perhaps students could provide feedback on what they learned, or how the conduct process helped them think, grow, reflect, or explore other themes related to education, prompting them to engage in their own reflection and observations.

One interviewee explicitly noted that they wanted to participate in the interviews because of the opportunity to discuss the situation with someone, reflect on it, and provide feedback. The survey conducted in the past may need to be reworked or rebranded to be conducted in meetings, where students are informed to look out for the survey as part of the process. This would likely need to be discussed with multiple campus offices, such as the legal department, and participation would be voluntary, with confidentiality ensured. Next, we will examine the opportunities available to those responsible for documentation when a conduct violation is taking place, as well as their unique opportunity for education.

Recommendations for Those in Intervention Roles

All members of the campus community can initiate referrals of student conduct violations to the offices for student conduct, typically including Resident Assistants (RAs), police officers, security officers, or professors. As both interviewees and survey participants pointed out, the act of violating a policy and being caught is an area rife with stress, regret, guilt, and fear. While this area is not always conducive to learning, the captive audience a professor has for catching a student cheating on an exam or engaging

in academic dishonesty in a term paper is rich with opportunity. A police officer talking to a student out late at night for public intoxication, or an RA knocking on a door for the fifth time in a single night for loud music, provides opportunities for education.

While interviewees and survey participants reported that being caught was a critical phase of the student conduct process, they also reported that much of the growth and reflection came from themselves. Police officers, RAs, professors, and others are all taught to educate students when they are caught. Police officers recite laws and reasons students receive tickets or are being documented. RAs recite the building's policies and inform residents of who else is impacted by noise from next door. Professors can reiterate the importance of academic integrity and a fair process. Yet, these students reflected upon how their own fault was the reason they were caught, or that they expected to get away with it, and understood they were “being dumb”. A suggestion for authority figures is then to lean into this, knowing that students are primed for their own learning, but not from authority figures.

This, in turn, leads to my final recommendation for those in an intervention role. Perhaps students are in a fearful state, not primed to receive information. A stern talking to will be heard, but perhaps not listened to or retained as much as the student assigns their own growth to the resulting shame and guilt they feel from being caught by an authority figure. The advice may then be similar to the above for hearing officers. Students who are already hard on themselves may not need reinforcement from authority figures. Even a façade of acting tough or cool posing might be a way of processing the struggle within to begin to process that they made a mistake. Authority figures should then express patience when documenting, ask if the process is straightforward, and

politely and firmly request identification. They should also recruit those present to help if there is a large number of students. Remembering that their reflection will be on their own actions, authority figures have an opportunity to interact in a way that is helpful towards the process, not harmful or destructive, such as polite language, seeking to understand before reciting policy and rules, as well as asking if they have questions regarding the next steps in the process. The final area of implications will discuss those possible for educators, such as alcohol or substance abuse, and facilitators of those processes.

Pre-Violation and Sanction Recommendations for Educators

Through individual interviews, several interviewees reiterated that low-level sanctions, including the modules students undergo for minor violations, are more likely to serve as a good reminder tool but not an effective teaching method. Is it possible that this is then a sign of a good facilitation tool, or could something else be identified? While students reported not learning from these requirements, is it possible that they are merely indicators of a previous best practice and need to be phased out? What might an assessment of these pre-violation practices result in if assessed for learning and reflection? Future research could assess the success of these tools from students' self-reports, evaluating aspects such as accessibility, helpfulness, and educational value. If students report they are not helpful but substance abuse on a campus that adopted went down, this would possibly dismiss this notion. Proper assessment and feedback from students could indicate better use of funding for these services or suggest best practices for research on college campuses. Students may have negative or neutral feelings towards

substance abuse education regardless of the format, but assessment could be a good place to start.

In sanctions that take place in person, such as a classroom approach to alcohol or drug use in a large group setting, facilitators have an opportunity as well. Student interviewees reported that the vibe in these settings was neutral in terms of facilitation, but also quite negative based on the other participants present. Could educators for in-person or online-based instruction for students found violating alcohol or drug policies collaborate with offices for institutional curriculum and classroom design to update or enhance presentations to make them more active and engaging? Do they already do this? Is alcohol and drug-related education in person already an unengaging and boring subject, no matter how fun or exciting the facilitator or lesson plan may be? Further research is needed to identify best practices in substance-related education, but a facilitation that is both informative and engaging could lead to better outcomes.

Finally, interviewees reported that fines had an impact on their student conduct experiences, but for different reasons. One reflected on how they accrued upwards of \$1,000 in fines in their first year, which served as a wake-up call to realize the toll they had paid for preventable issues with student conduct, specifically related to alcohol. While they acknowledged that many other aspects of the student conduct process were due in part to their learning and reflection, and the fines did not teach them much, the sheer amount they paid was a clear indication that they had an issue. This student did not report whether the interviewee and/or their family found the cost to be expensive or affordable.

Another interviewee reported that the fine, although a large amount, was due within a month and was paid off fully; however, they reflected that for students unable to pay the fine, it might have a bigger impact or even lead to their withdrawal from the institution. As topics such as food insecurity, the number of students admitted with student loans, scholarships, or those seeking jobs, like those investigated in this research, are found to have a biased outcome for students who cannot afford to pay. A recommendation is that fines and their impact on teaching students are related to their socio-economic background and are therefore biased. Institutions seeking to neutralize their instances of bias should consider removing fines, as a high-income student may learn little from a \$250 or \$750 fine. In contrast, a low-income student may be unable to pay the fine and be forced to leave the institution, arguably teaching them very little in the process.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research was conducted in March, a time of year when students receive their grades from the previous year and may be tired, especially first-year students nearing the end of their first year of school. A more suitable timeline for research may be the Fall semester, toward the end of the semester, and/or in May, toward the end of the Spring semester. While most first-year student survey participants violated policy in the Fall semester of their first year of college, this might be a better timeline for collecting future research.

Future research is recommended to focus on the limited scope of significance for specific survey results. Specifically, the results discussed in Table 4.14 regarding information sources by race. While it was a significant result, the effect size was

extremely low. It would be worth exploring in future research the significance of the information sources non-Whites receive, as well as the sources from which they receive it. It may lend itself to interesting data to find out more about how students, both White and non-White, receive or share information about student conduct offices and processes beyond those investigated in this research, as well as the sociological implications that this has on students.

Limitations, such as the small sample size of both survey participants and interviewees, could also be addressed in future research. Although the sample size was small, it was also conducted at a single institution with a uniform approach to student conduct, hearings, hearing officers, and intervention authorities. It would be interesting to include private and public institutions in a replication of this study, as well as institutions of varying sizes. This could potentially alter the outcomes related to which part of the conduct process is most conducive to learning, as well as the types of sanctions not employed by Atlantic University, which may impact learning and reflection.

Lastly, future research should focus on how the differences between men and women may be evolving. While the original focus of this study was to understand better why men are the majority violators of the student code of conduct, the participants in this study appeared to be evenly distributed in terms of gender makeup, reflecting the institution's overall gender composition. Future research to determine whether women are violating policy in higher numbers or men in fewer numbers could be an interesting discussion. Or is it possible that survey participants are more likely to be women, which is another possible outcome of why this research showed no relationship to gender?

Future research to delve deeper into the existing body of research on men getting into trouble might lead to a better understanding of student conduct on college campuses.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to gain a deeper understanding of the learning process students experience when undergoing the student conduct process. Three research questions were identified to help make meaning of this research, including student characteristics, student self-definition, and the steps of the student conduct process. A survey was sent to students who participated in the conduct process, which also asked for participation in individual interviews where these three research questions were examined in more detail. The questions addressed learning, reflection, feelings, growth, frustrations, and even anger with the student conduct process.

This research showed that student identities had little to do with their learning and outcomes as it relates to student conduct, which is contrary to much research on conduct and law enforcement. Further research on this topic was specifically suggested, as the study had a limited scope and a small number of participants. When it comes to self-definition, students reported initial fear, frustration, and anxiety, followed by a sense of ease, relaxation, and relief after the process. Students had a collective misconception of what the student conduct process entailed, and could easily walk stakeholders, such as their hearing officer, through the process for understanding.

Survey participants agreed with interviewees that two aspects of the student conduct process were most primed for learning: once the entire process was completed, as well as the act of being caught. Suggestions for educators and authority figures most closely related to these two phases include being patient, kind, answering questions, and

referring students to resources. These suggestions were given as students reported being hardest on themselves and did not need educators or authority figures to reiterate their feelings of frustration, guilt, and shame. Further research on student conduct should focus on larger groups of participants from multiple institutions and types, as well as on the relationship between gender and the outcomes of student conduct.

Implications included that students found email notices too strict, hearings were extremely helpful in alleviating fears, and relief was fully felt after sanctions were complete. Intervention officials should be aware that while students are often their own harshest critics, it is best to approach students caught violating policy in a helpful, polite, and inquisitive manner. This phase of student conduct is primed for learning to occur. Educators are encouraged to find engaging ways to help students understand content, especially in regard to alcohol and drug use. Facilitation should be engaging and fun while also teaching important material, and that fines are a biased and inequitable practice.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Header and survey description:

Thank you for your interest in this vital research. Several students will conduct this survey to measure learning as part of the conduct hearing process.

Answering questions regarding incidents may be triggering. If you need any resources, here are a few of the campus offices that are best equipped to help you:

Counseling Services

Wellness Center

Student Conduct

Student Health

Participants should be aware that there is a chance to earn one of three \$25 Amazon gift certificates as compensation for the survey aspect of this research.

At the end of the survey, you will find a final question regarding individual interviews. These interviews will discuss the conduct hearing process and your reflections on it. Participation is optional, and by filling in the last question, you are expressing your interest in an individual interview.

Thank you for your interest in this vital research. Your participation is voluntary. By completing this survey, you are consenting to participate in this research voluntarily. Participation in this research will in no way impact your student conduct record and will not be relayed to the Office for Student Conduct and Community Standards. The goal is to understand the hearings from the student perspective. There is a chance to earn one of three \$25 Amazon gift certificates as compensation for the survey aspect of this research. At the end of the survey, you will find a final question regarding individual interviews. These interviews will discuss the conduct hearing process and your reflections on it. Participation is optional, and by filling in the last question, you are expressing your interest in an individual interview.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could take a moment to complete this survey. It should take no more than 15 minutes.

A) I agree b) not at this time.

1. Which of the following best describes your gender:
 - a) Cisgender Man b) Cisgender Woman c) Trans Man, d) Trans Woman, e) Non-Binary, f) Other (Fill in short text block)
2. Which of the following do you identify as your race or ethnicity?
 - a) White b) Hispanic/Latino c) Black or African American d) Asian or Pacific Islander e) More than one of these f) Other
3. Check all of the following that apply to you:
 - a) Are you a Student Athlete?
 - b) Are you an international student?
 - c) Are you involved in a Fraternity or Sorority?
 - d) Involved in music on campus (e.g., Band, Jazz group, Orchestra, etc.
 - e) Are you involved in registered clubs and organizations on campus?
4. Do you have an on-campus job?
5. Are you currently a student at Atlantic University? What year did you first start at Atlantic University?
6. Year in school when the violation occurred?
7. What is your current age?
8. How would you rate yourself as a student (1-5 Likert Scale)
9. How many credits had you completed at the time of your conduct hearing?
10. What college are you currently enrolled in?
11. Were you an undergraduate or graduate student at the time of your violation?
12. Have you attended a conduct hearing or hearing board while a student at Atlantic University?
13. Prior to your hearing, did you have any exposure to the hearing process? For example, did a friend go through a hearing and tell you about it? Did you read the student code of conduct? If yes, please explain.
14. Are the case or cases you were involved with closed and completed? For example, your hearing has already been held, there are no further meetings or appeals, all sanctions except probation have been completed, and all files for this case have been closed.
15. How many incidents have you been involved in that led to a hearing or a hearing board? (Not including guest card violations).
16. In what year and month was your hearing or hearing board held? (Most recent hearing if multiple).
17. Did you appeal the decision of the hearing or hearing board?
18. Rating 1-5 from 1, no learning occurred, to 5, learning occurred. Try as accurately as possible to rate the learning that occurred as a result of the following. An example of an underage student caught drinking alcohol will be used to describe each point as guidance) Learning is defined as the point at which you are able to stop, reflect, and make decisions based on new information. – Use a generic example of any hearing process.
 - a) **Pre-violation Education** (Such as online alcohol education, drug prevention courses, etc.) (Any awareness of the conduct process prior to your violation)
 - b) **During the violation** (Drinking underage)
 - c) **Intervention** (Caught by police or staff drinking underage)

- d) **Charge letter** (A hearing is scheduled, and you are given a date and time of the hearing)
- e) **Hearing** (A one-on-one or hearing board to hold a process review, and the hearing itself, where you describe your side of the story)
- f) **Sanctions and findings** (Given a responsible or not responsible result, and if found responsible, sanctions are assigned to you)
- g) **Sanction completion** (Completing sanctions such as Alcohol EDU or reflection essay)
- h) **Reflection** (The time from sanction completion to now, when you have reflected, discussed with others, or had other interactions since your sanctions were completed)

Would you like to volunteer to be interviewed?

Interviews will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes in length each. If you have any questions about participating in this survey, are interested in the individual interview, or have any other inquiries, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly at MattH@temple.edu or 218-329-7008. Thanks again!

1. Would you like to volunteer to be interviewed (Yes/No)
2. Given my role at the University, I am seeking to minimize bias as much as possible in this study. I therefore will not interview any student I served as a Hearing Officer for. Do we know each other in any capacity, and/or did I serve as your hearing officer for your conduct hearing, etc? (Yes/No)
3. What is your email?
4. What is your first name?
5. What is your last name?

APPENDIX B
SURVEY EMAIL TO STUDENTS

Hello Everyone!

My name is Matt Hulett, and I am currently a doctoral student in the Higher Education program at Temple University. I am writing to request your participation in my research, which aims to investigate the learning process through the analysis of student conduct. My research aims to provide more thoughtful conduct hearings for students in the future, and your input would be valuable to this research!

The interest survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and includes basic information about you and your experience with student conduct. By completing the survey, you are showing your interest in this research. Consent to participate information will be included at the beginning of the survey. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. There are three \$25 Amazon gift cards that will be given to three randomly selected participants after the survey has been live for 3 weeks. A separate link is included within the survey for selecting the Amazon gift card. If you are willing to share more of your thoughts about the process, you will be given the opportunity to volunteer for an interview at the end of the survey. Please consider this, and I will follow up with you individually.

Here is the research survey:

https://educationtemple.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bjcGttTPIV7SAOq

Attached, you will find a complete consent form explaining the process for this research survey, including details about your participation and the survey link to participate.

Additional information regarding your consent in this research is also located at the beginning of the survey.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 218-329-7008 or at MattH@temple.edu.

Thank you for considering participating in this vital research!

Sincerely,

Matthew M. Hulett

Doctoral Student

School of Education – Temple University

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW EMAIL TO STUDENTS

Hello all,

I hope this email finds you well and that you are enjoying your Summer! I am reaching out to you after you expressed interest in participating in interviews for my research as part of my doctoral program at Temple University, which investigates learning and student conduct.

Your input will be paramount in this vital research to better understand how we can help students who undergo the conduct process. Your participation in individual interviews is voluntary, and **you will be compensated with a \$20 Amazon gift card for your participation.** This will include time to review consent forms and an audio-recorded interview.

Please fill out the survey below to help us identify a time we can schedule our interview for the next several weeks: https://educationtemple.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8v4uNDw8L5IC1V4.

As always, please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Matthew M. Hulett

Resident Director

Temple University

Office of University Housing & Residential Life

Email: Mattmh@temple.edu

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Could you briefly describe your experience at Atlantic University so far?
2. Why did you come to Atlantic University?
3. What has been one experience at Atlantic University that you have grown the most from so far?
4. What has been the most challenging aspect of being an Atlantic University student so far?
5. Pre-violence education is quite prominent at Atlantic University. Upon being admitted, we ask students to do some online courses on alcohol and drugs. What did you learn as a result of completing these and other pre-violation education modules?
6. Previous to your violation, did you have any exposure to the process of student conduct?
7. Could you briefly describe the incident that occurred?
8. From the perspective of yourself in that moment, in the incident, how would you describe your actions during the incident?
9. During the incident, did you feel in control of your own actions? Why or why not?
10. What do you feel led you to violate policy?
11. Were there others involved in this incident? If yes, did their presence impact your actions during the incident?
12. Did you know that your actions violated the policies?
 - A. If so, please tell me more about why you chose to violate the existing policy.
 - B. If No – Tell me more about the policies you knew existed outside this incident in that moment.
13. Did you learn as a result of violating policy, being caught violating policy, and having an interaction with staff documenting an incident? If so, what?
14. During the process review, did you have an opportunity to read the report, have your rights explained to you, and understand the procedure?
15. Did you feel you had enough time to explain your side of the narrative during the hearing? Why or why not?
16. Did you feel that you were listened to during the hearing?
 - a. If yes, continue
 - b. If not, could you please explain why?
17. Did you feel the hearing went well? Why or why not?
18. How did you feel during the hearing? What contributed to that feeling?
19. How did you feel after the hearing? What contributed to that feeling?

- a. If similar, continue.
 - b. If different, ask why these emotions were different.
- 20.** What are your thoughts on the fairness of your process review and hearing? Why?
 - 21.** Did you learn as a result of your conduct hearing, responsible or not responsible findings, and issued sanctions? If so, what?
 - 22.** Could you briefly describe the sanctions you received as a result of your findings?
 - a. If given reflective/essay sanctions: Did you learn anything from your educational sanctions? If so, what?
 - b. If given punitive sanctions: Did you learn anything from your punitive sanctions? If so, what?
 - 23.** Were sanctions tailored to your individual needs and incident?
 - a. Did the hearing officer work with you to make the sanctions helpful to your unique incident?
 - b. If no, continue.
 - 24.** Did you have enough time to complete your sanctions on time? Why or why not?
 - 25.** Did you learn as a result of the sanctions you were given? If so, what?
 - 26.** Overall, what do you feel is your biggest takeaway from the student conduct process, including your violation, process review, hearing, sanctions, and completion of sanctions?
 - 27.** What emotions and feelings do you tie to the conduct process as a whole?
 - 28.** Did you feel closure or lingering feelings toward the entire conduct process we are discussing today, and why?
 - 29.** Do you have any feedback or feelings about the way the student conduct process is run, or what would you change about it?
 - 30.** What did you learn about yourself by going through the conduct process?
 - 31.** What opportunities were you given during the hearing process to reflect and learn?
 - 32.** What reflective conversations did you have with non-Atlantic University staff and students regarding the incident?
 - 33.** Through each of the phases of the conduct process, which do you feel had the most impact on your learning as a student?
 - 34.** Besides being prompted to reflect by staff in your process, what did you do to reflect or think about what you learned on your own?
 - 35.** Has your student conduct experience impacted your experience at Atlantic University moving forward? How so?
 - 36.** Did you have anything you hoped I would ask about today that you would like to comment on, regardless of the topic?

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Title: The Learning Process Through Student Conduct Hearings

Investigator: Joseph DuCette
Matthew Hulett
1910 Liacouras Walk (Ste 301)
Philadelphia, PA 19122
United States of America

Daytime Phone Number: 218-329-7008

RESEARCH CONSENT

You are being asked for your consent to take part in a research study. This document provides a concise summary of this research. It provides the key information that we believe most people need to make an informed decision about participating in this research. Later sections of this document will provide all relevant details.

What should I know about this research?

- Someone will explain this research to you.
- Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether you take part is up to you.
- If you don't take part, it won't be held against you.
- You can take part now and later drop out, and it won't be held against you
- If you don't understand, ask questions.
- Ask all the questions you want before making a decision.
- This research will take place at Atlantic University

How long will I be in this research?

We expect that your taking part in this research will last 45 to 60 minutes. Interviews will be conducted in a semi-structured interview style.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this research is to examine the learning, reflection, and growth students experience as a result of participating in a student conduct hearing. Subjects who have completed a brief survey will be selected to participate in individual interviews. This

research will examine the student conduct process as students reflect on their personal experiences.

About 10-12 subjects will participate in this research.

What happens to me if I agree to take part in this research?

If you decide to participate in this research study, the general procedures will include an individual interview scheduled for 45 to 60 minutes via Zoom, which will be audio-recorded. This consent form will be discussed, and any questions will be answered prior to the interview. Verbal consent will be obtained at the start of the interview. A pseudonym will also be identified and used during the interview.

Could being in this research hurt me?

The focus of this research is on the procedures, learning, reflection, and growth related to the conduct violation, rather than the specifics of the conduct hearing or the violation itself. Regarding the topic of research, some questions may be triggering in nature. In the event that distress may occur, the interview will be immediately stopped, and the student will be provided with materials related to Atlantic University's Health Services, Counseling Services, Student Conduct, and Wellness Resources.

Breach of confidentiality is a risk inherent in any human subject research endeavor. Extraordinary efforts will be taken to ensure this will not happen, including the following: Data will be de-identified. All subjects will be given a pseudonym. Data will be stored in a locked office, on a password-protected laptop, and in a locked building. No personally identifiable information will be included in the final dissertation. As included in the initial protocol.

Will being in this research benefit me?

The most important benefits that you may expect from taking part in this research include thoughtful reflection, and no other benefits are expected.

What happens to the information collected for this research?

Your private information will be shared with individuals and organizations (if applicable) that conduct or watch over this research, including:

- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed this research
- Temple University

NOTE: We may publish the results of this research. However, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

We protect your information from disclosure to others to the extent required by law. We cannot promise complete secrecy.

Data collected in this research will be de-identified and may be used for future research or distributed to another investigator for future research without your consent.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or believe this research has harmed you or made you sick, please get in touch with the research team at the phone number listed above on the first page.

This research is being overseen by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). An IRB is a group of people who perform an independent review of research studies. You may talk to them at (215) 707-3390 or irb@temple.edu if:

- You have questions, concerns, or complaints that the research team has not addressed.
- You are not getting answers from the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You would like to discuss the research with someone else.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.

Will I be compensated for participating in this research?

Interviewees will be compensated for their time with a \$20 Amazon.com gift card, which will be sent via email at the conclusion of the interview.

Can I be removed from this research without my approval?

The person in charge of this research can remove you from this research without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include:

- It is in your best interest
- You are unable to keep your scheduled appointments

We will tell you about any new information that may affect your health, welfare, or choice to stay in this research.

What happens if I agree to participate in this research but later change my mind?

If you decide to leave this research, contact the research team so that the investigator can remove your data from consideration in the study. Additionally, your decision to participate or to withdraw will be confidential and will not be shared with other participants.

What else should I be aware of regarding this research?

Other information that may be important for you to consider when deciding whether to participate in this research is that the researcher, Matt Hulett, is functioning

independently of his role in the Office of Residential Life. Participation in this research will in no way impact your student conduct record and will not be relayed to the Office for Student Conduct and Community Standards. It should, however, be noted that the researcher is a Mandated Reporter. This means any disclosure of an act of sexual violence or sex/gender discrimination would have to be reported to the Title IX Coordinator of the university and would result in termination of the interview process. Suppose a student discloses information pertaining to a Title IX incident. In that case, the researcher will offer the student resources and compile a brief description of the incident to be sent to the Director of Housing and the Title IX coordinator at Atlantic University. These staff members will then continue to follow up on resources and support for the student.

In an effort to provide you, the subject, with as much opportunity for honesty in our conversation as possible, I will not report any incidents that may be considered student misconduct. I will treat them as hearsay, they will be kept confidentially, and they will have no impact or consequences on the interview. Please note, I will still report things that I am a mandated reporter for (e.g., sexual violence or sex/gender discrimination).

Statement of Consent:

Thank you for consenting to be interviewed and acknowledging that there is a loss of confidentiality in doing so. However, a pseudonym will be assigned to your responses once the interview has been conducted.

Signature of the adult subject capable of consent

Date

Printed name of subject

Signature of the person obtaining consent

Date

Printed name of the person obtaining consent