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Graduate Research Symposium 2016

Title
When and Why is it Wrong to Copy from Others? Variability in Students' Evaluations of Plagiarism

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WHEN AND WHY IS IT WRONG TO COPY FROM OTHERS?

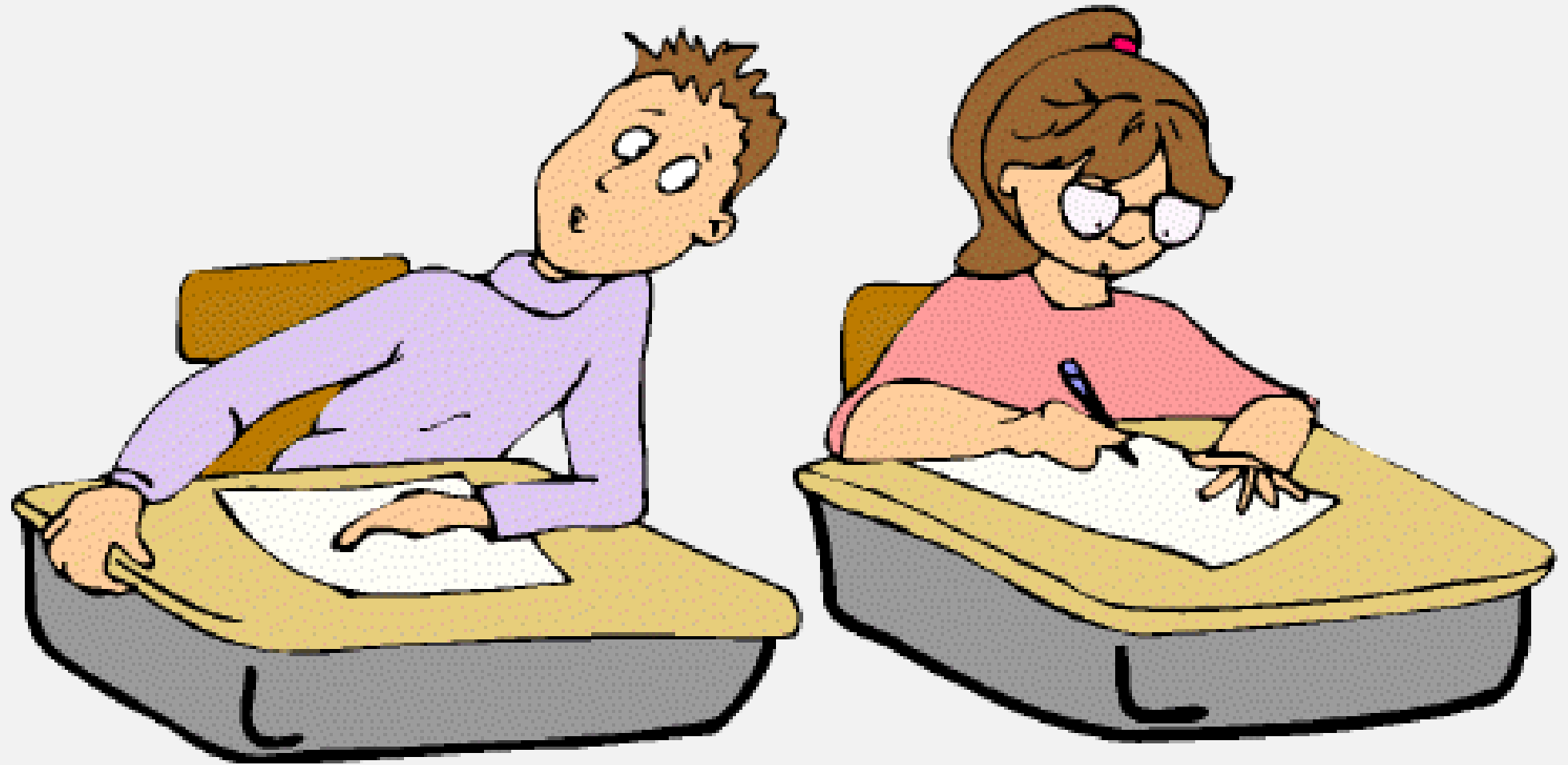## VARIABILITY IN STUDENTS' EVALUATIONS OF PLAGIARISM

Presenter: Talia Waltzer

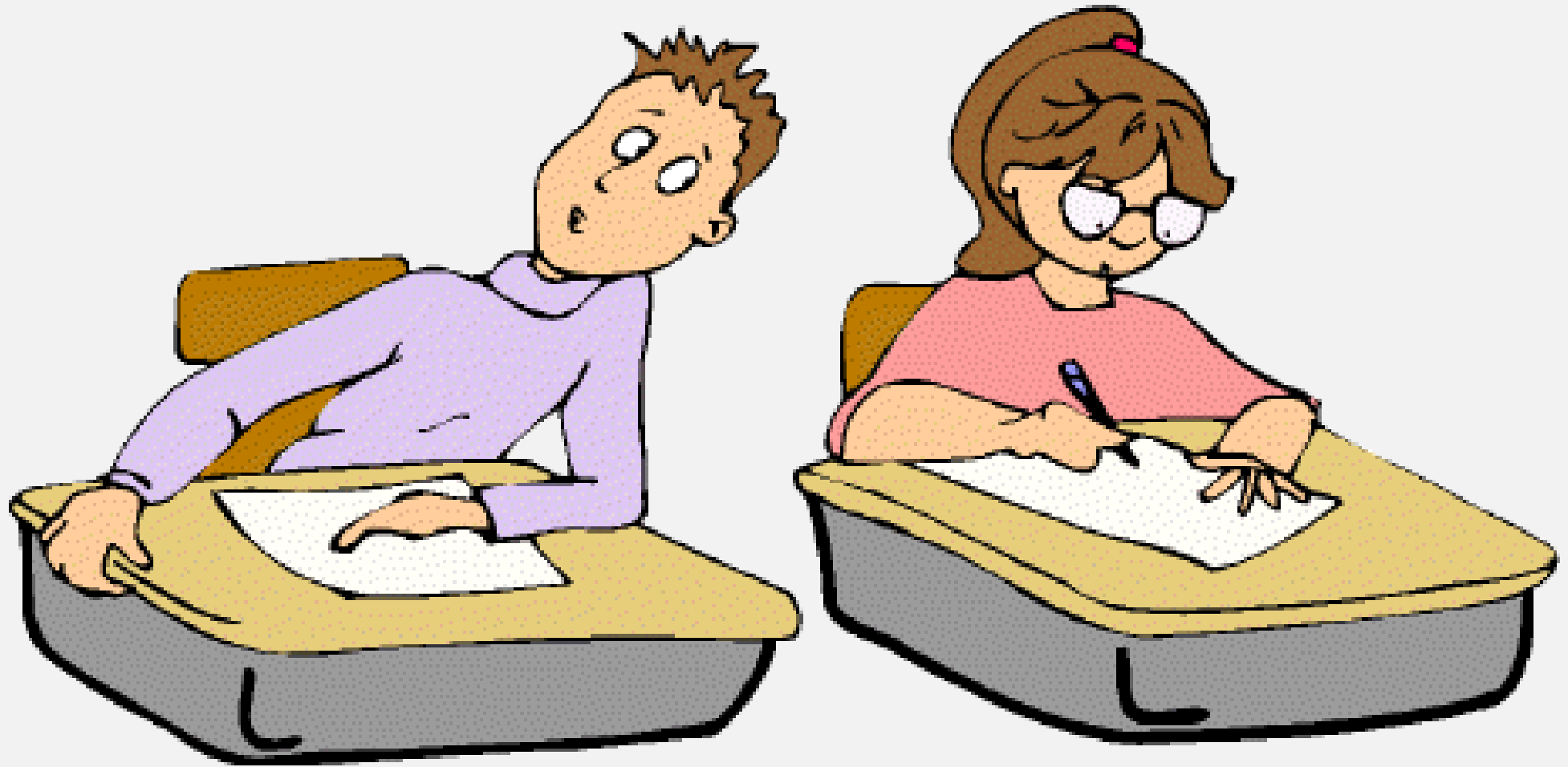Co-authors: Elina Berman, Audun Dahl

Psychology Department

University of California, Santa Cruz
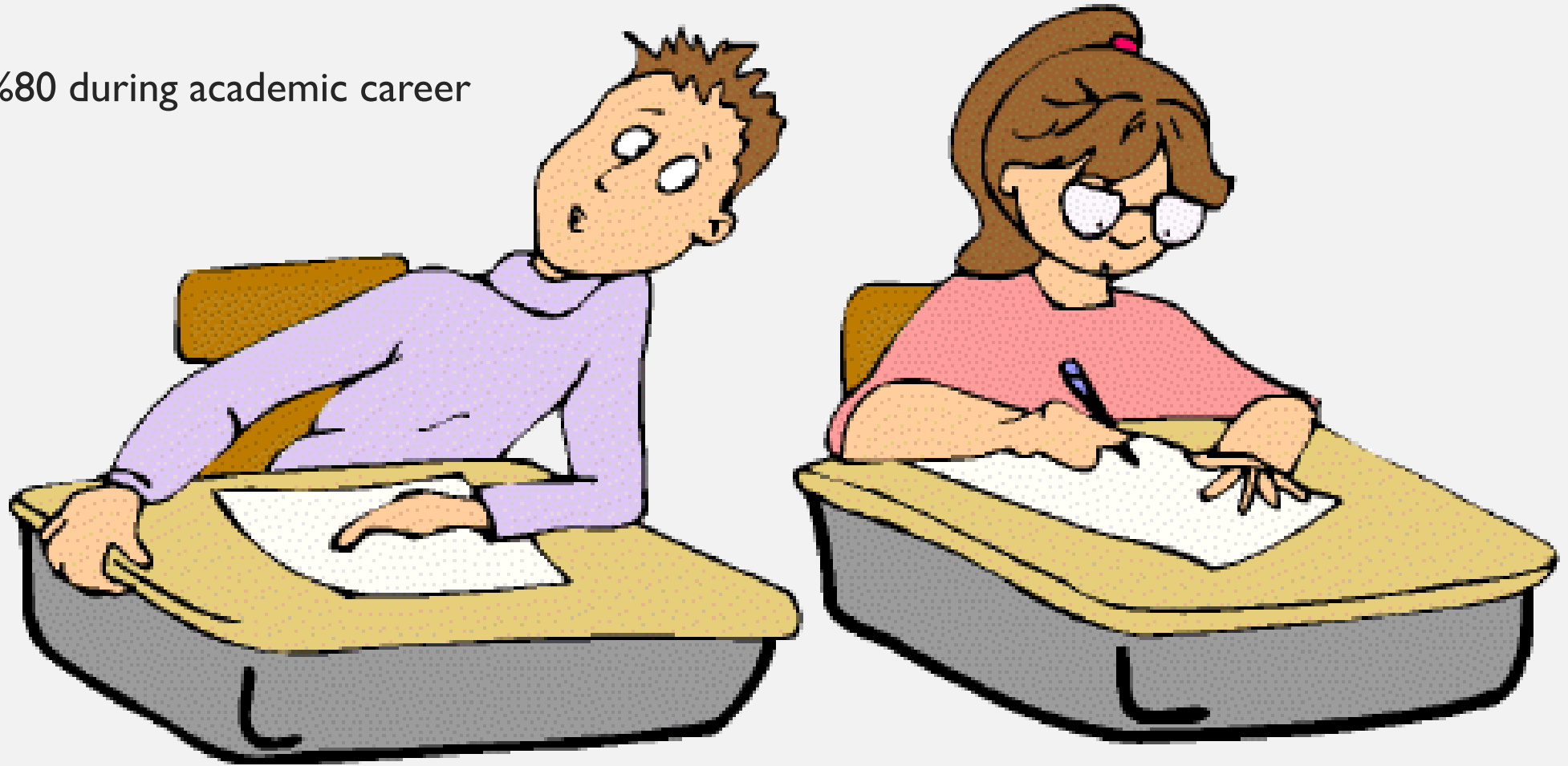
PLAGIARISM

- varying reports of incidences

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- more than 50% in an academic year

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- more than 50% in an academic year

- some reports ~%80 during academic career

Park, C. (2003). In other (people's) words: Plagiarism by university students – literature and lessons. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 28,* 471-488.

WHY?

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- **People don't care**
  - Selfish motives?

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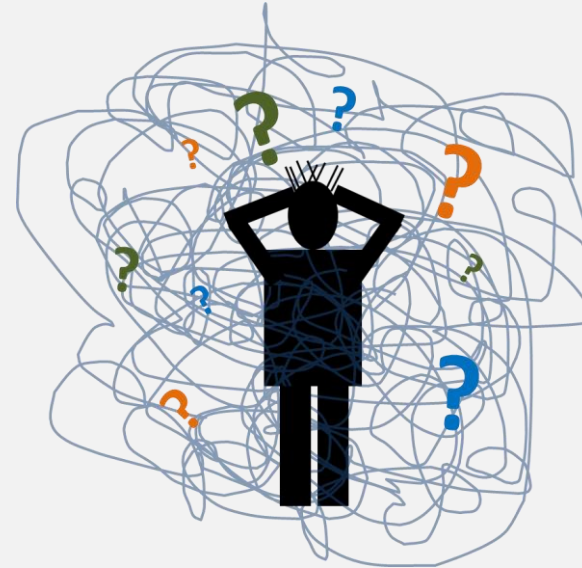 - Moral decay of our society?!?!?!?

- **Judgments are highly contextualized**
  - Some features of situations may lead to plagiarism

WHY?

- **People don't care**
  - Selfish motives?
  - Moral decay of our society?!?!?!?

- **Judgments are highly contextualized**
  - Some features of situations may lead to plagiarism
  - Multiple considerations taken into account

PARTICIPANTS

- 30 undergraduate students at University of California, Santa Cruz

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  - Average age 20 years old

  - Variety of majors; 13 in Psychology

  - All but 5 from California

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- Given research credit for participation in 1-hr interview

ORIGINAL

It was expected (a) that children's judgments of moral events would be based on factors intrinsic to actions and not on the presence of a rule, and (b) that their judgments of social conventional events would be based on whether or not they are in violation of a rule. Second, it was hypothesized that moral events would produce different types of social interactions from those produced by social conventional events.

ADAM

One question was whether children's evaluations of moral situations were driven by aspects tied to actions themselves, or merely the existence of a rule. Another proposal was that children's evaluations of social conventional situations would be based on breaking rules. The hypothesis was that moral events and social conventional events are distinct, and therefore they were expected to lead to different forms of social interactions.

CONTEXTUAL VARIATIONS

SIMILARITY   **SITUATION**

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SIMILARITY

SITUATION

- **Similar**
  - Only 10-20% of text changed to synonyms
- **Ambiguous**
  - 40-60% of text changed
  - Changes in sentence structure and order
- **Paraphrased**
  - No more than 3 words in a row identical
  - New ideas / examples

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SITUATION

- Take-home exam
- Essay assignment
- Group project
- Notes for class

QUESTIONS

- Was it **okay or not okay** for Adam to submit this?
  - **Why?**
- **Rate** his action:

| Really bad										Really good
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
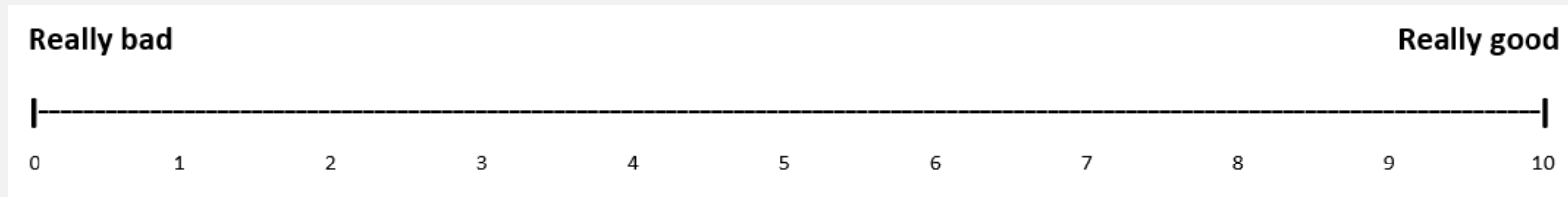
- Did it count as **plagiarism**?
- What if there were **no rule** against plagiarism?
- Hypotheticals: what if he were under a lot of **pressure**? What if he **didn't want to learn**?
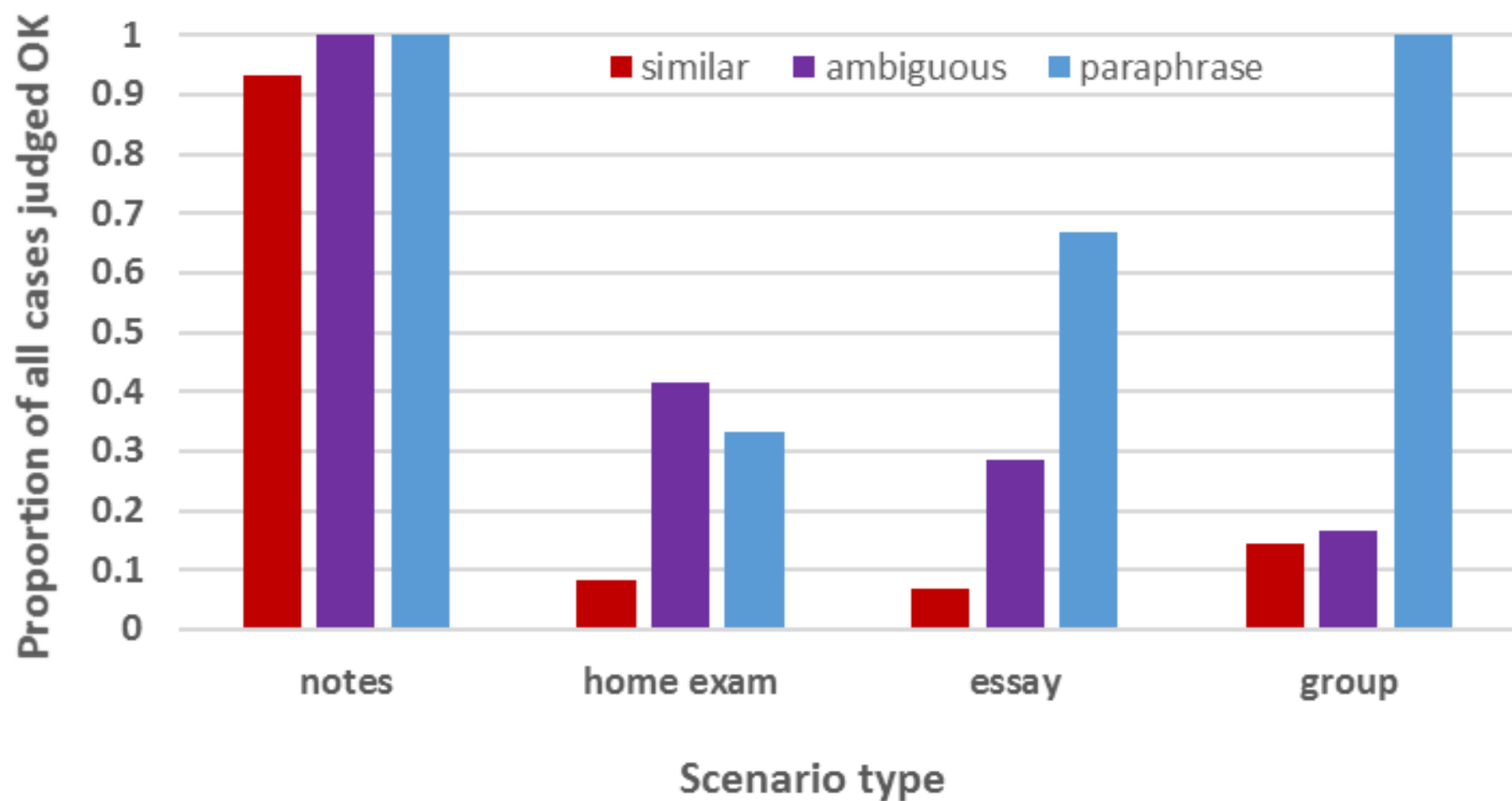
RESULTS

- Did the presence of a rule against plagiarism influence judgments?

- Did the similarity of the texts influence judgments?

  - i.e., more similar texts judged to be less acceptable?

- Did the type of scenario influence judgments?

  - i.e., some cases seen as more serious?
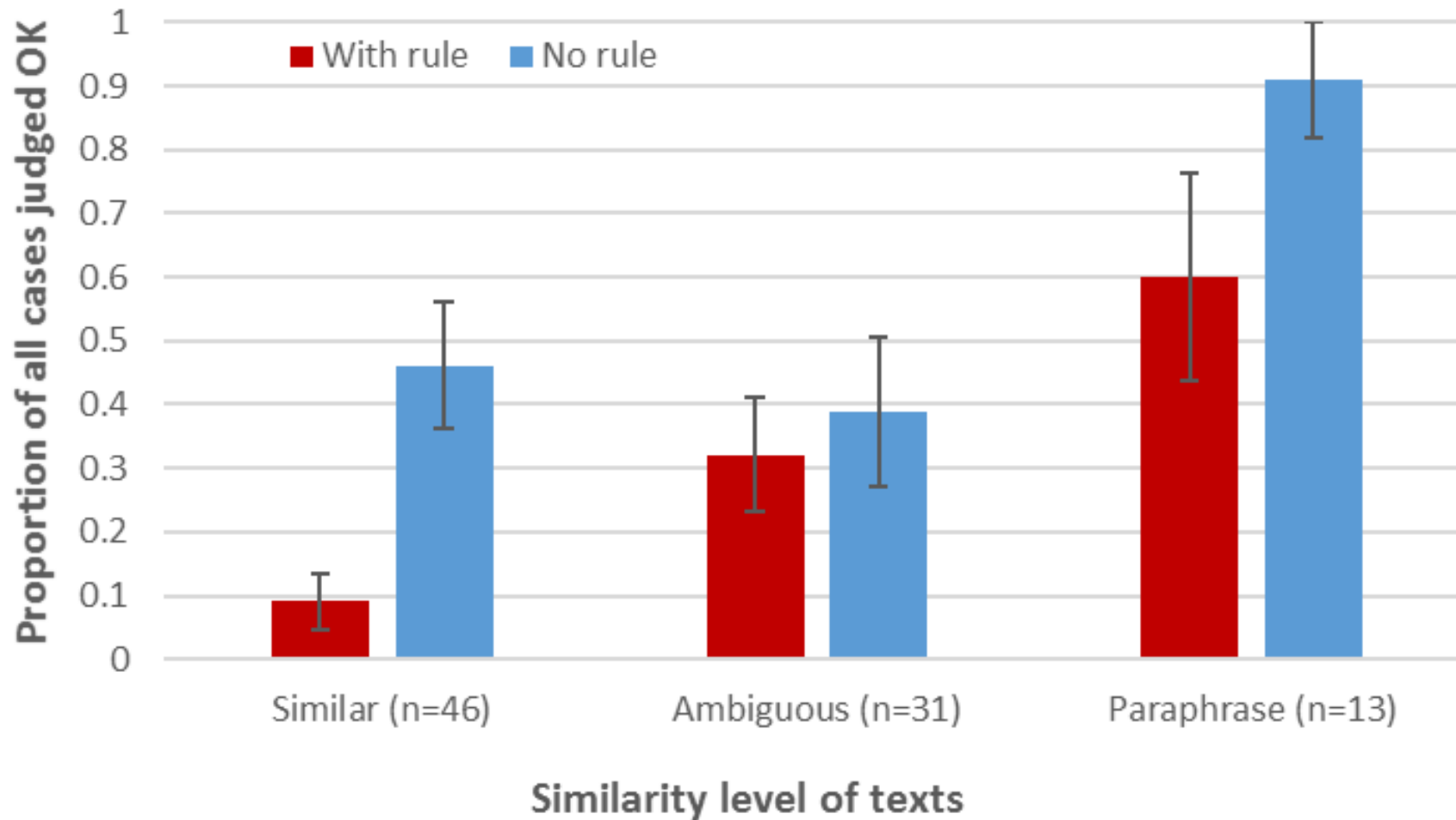
*Error bars represent standard errors of the mean.

JUSTIFICATIONS

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- **Yes, it was okay**

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JUSTIFICATIONS

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  - …yeah because she's not breaking a rule. It's not bad because it's… accepted.

JUSTIFICATIONS

- **No, it was not okay**

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- **No, it was not okay**

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  - …even though your university says it's okay, it's not okay to take ownership of other people's work. that's why I feel it's wrong, because you're stealing someone else's things.

  - …stealing is disastrous for society.

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1. Yes, people think plagiarism is wrong (correlation: .899)

2. But, there's a lot of contextual variability

3. People provide a variety of justifications for why plagiarism is permissible or impermissibile

4. Those justifications can help us understand how people view plagiarism in a certain situation

   - i.e., if emphasize learning, will not think it's wrong if there isn't much to learn

   - i.e., if emphasize rules, will not think it's wrong when there are no rules

THANK YOU

- All of the **research participants**
- Advisor: **Audun Dahl**
- Co-author: **Elina Berman**
- Research assistants:
  - **Giovanni Gonzalez**
  - **Kavitha Hari**
- **UCSC Early Social Interaction Lab**
  - https://esil.ucsc.edu/
  - https://www.facebook.com/UCSCesil/

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