

## ABSTRACT

Cheating at Baylor

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In the Fall of 2018, Baylor University announced changes to its honor code that it made in order to combat the rise of internet cheating. This thesis project is a phenomenological study, and it explores the motivations, self-justifications, and methods that Baylor students use to cheat in their classes using semi-structured interviews with current Baylor students. Through a coded analysis of the interviews, I found, among other trends, that some Baylor students believe in the mutual exclusivity of cheating and learning and that they use such a belief in order to justify behavior that their professors would likely consider to be academic integrity violations. After analyzing my findings through the lens of the current academic integrity literature, I suggest to Baylor and the Office of Academic Integrity changes to make to classroom and university policy that would work to decrease internet cheating as well as the current disillusionment with the honor code.

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# CHEATING AT BAYLOR

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

In the Fall of 2017, I sat through an honor council hearing that lasted five and a half hours (four hours longer than scheduled). The hearing involved multiple students and their use of an online resource called Quizlet. Quizlet is a website where students can make virtual flashcards for free in a matter of minutes. Through the site, students can also access other students' flashcards (unless the flashcard set was intentionally made private). A common practice, I learned in this hearing, is for students to search Quizlet for publicly available flashcards made by students who had taken the exact same Baylor class in recent years. In a charitable view, these students were simply seeking to compare notes with classmates of the past to make sure that they had correctly recorded the most relevant lecture material. However, the Quizlet that a third of the class found online was actually a verbatim set of the questions and answers from the professor's weekly quizzes. It turns out that, to help students study for their finals each semester, this professor would grant them access to all the in-class quizzes they had taken via an app over the course of that semester so that they could practice answering those questions in the last few weeks leading up to the final exam. Then, once the semester was over, the professor denied the students access to those quizzes so that his questions would remain secure. The following year, the professor would give the same quizzes in the same order, granting students access to the questions and answers only once they had taken all the quizzes for

the semester and were preparing for the final. It was a system that seemed to work well for the professor, until the high frequency of perfect quiz scores made him suspicious.

The professor had not anticipated the use of Quizlet. Presumably, when he released his quizzes back to the students at the end of the semester in order to let them study in the final few weeks, some of the students, in an honest effort to quiz themselves again with the material, made virtual flashcards of the questions and answers from every quiz they had taken that year. The students then practiced the questions and answers in order to prepare for their final with material that had come directly from the professor. So far, no cheating. The problem came the next semester when students (about 30 to be exact), searched the internet for Quizlets pertaining to their class in order to reconcile their notes with the flashcards of the students from the past. When the first quiz rolled around for this iteration of students, they must have noticed how familiar each of the professor's questions were and realized that the Quizlet of "notes" that they had found from previous students actually contained the answers to every single quiz question they would be asked that year. They enjoyed perfect scores on their weekly quizzes for most of the semester, and then the professor, suspicious of their high grades, slightly tweaked the questions, watched the grades plummet from perfect scores to zeros, and assigned much of the class academic integrity violations.

In the hearing, the students from which the council and I heard were shocked with the accusation of cheating. "Quizlet is a study resource I have been using since high school," many of them argued. Others asked how they could



have possibly known that the Quizlet they had stumbled on contained all the answers they needed. Still more students argued that accessing public information on the internet should never be prohibited and that it was the professor's fault for using a system that so easily compromised his own quizzes. How could they be held responsible for the professor's poor course design that was so out of touch with the modern use of the internet?

The council reasoned that neither using Quizlet nor stumbling on an answer key was ground for an honor code violation. However, when the students took the first quiz (or two) of the semester, realized that they already had the answers to each question, and failed to report to the professor that his quiz had been compromised, they violated III.C.8 of the honor code which describes obtaining unauthorized information prior to an examination as an example of "dishonorable conduct in connection with an academic matter" (Baylor University, 2018). While it was clear that the students had obtained an unfair advantage on the quizzes and behaved dishonorably, III.C.8 fails to consider that a student might obtain unauthorized material by mistake through the internet. The problem was not so much with the obtaining as it was the using and failure to report compromised material to the professor. There was clearly a dilemma in the honor code, and two revisions were made in response the very next summer.

On September 21<sup>st</sup> of 2018, I, along with all the other students at Baylor, received the following in an email from an important administrator whose identity I will conceal (John Smith, personal communication):

*Dear Baylor Students:*

*I am writing to draw your attention to a revised Honor Code that has been put into place for the 2018-2019 academic year. You can find it at the following link:*

*<https://www.baylor.edu/honorcode/index.php?id=952547>*

*Last spring, the University worked through a revision process to address some of the technology-related issues that have arisen in recent Honor Council cases. In particular, be sure to take a look at Sections III.C.12 and III.C.16. The statement below provides additional information regarding III.C.16 (which is a new addition).*

*As you begin the new semester, I strongly encourage you to have a conversation with your instructors about the appropriate use of online sources for studying purposes.*

*If you have questions about the revised Honor Code or about the Honor Council process in general, you may contact Ms. Linda Cates, Director of the Office of Academic Integrity, at 254 710-1715 or [Linda\\_Cates@baylor.edu](mailto:Linda_Cates@baylor.edu).*

*My very best wishes to each of you as you begin the fall term.*

*Regards,*

*Dr. [John Smith]*

*[Baylor Administration]*

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*Important Addition to the Honor Code*

*A new section has been added to the Honor Code making it a violation to:*

*Use, upload, download, or purchase any online resource that has been derived from material pertaining to a Baylor course without the written permission of the professor.*

*This statement applies to all online resources including Quizlet, Course Hero, Chegg, etc. The intention behind this statement is not to prohibit the use of these tools; rather, the statement signifies that, if students want to use material from one of these resources (or any other online resource), they must obtain written permission from the appropriate Baylor instructor before doing so. Permission may be granted in a syllabus, but it must be in written form.*

*For more information see <https://www.baylor.edu/honorcode>*

*For questions, please contact [Academic\\_Integrity@baylor.edu](mailto:Academic_Integrity@baylor.edu)*

Through conversations with the chair of the honor council and the director of the Office of Academic Integrity I learned that these honor code changes were made as a direct response to the Quizlet hearing I had participated in a year earlier that involved so many students. III.C.12 directly fixed the problem that the council and I had encounter in the Quizlet hearing. As a definition of academic dishonesty, it states, “Submitting an examination about which one has unauthorized information without reporting such fact to the appropriate faculty member” (Baylor University, 2018, III.C.12). This is exactly what the council needed in order to more clearly describe the actual infraction of the 30 students involved. This clause allows us to take the blame off of the resource itself and place it on the behavior of taking advantage of a compromised quiz without

notifying the professor. The problem was not Quizlet. The problem was also not the use of Quizlets from previous semesters; students are free to compare lecture notes and study resources with their peers. The problem was in the specific use of Quizlet to unfairly and intentionally (after the first time) obtain an advantage on in-class quizzes. III.C.12 was exactly what the honor code needed.

III.C.16, however, has since provided, from my limited perspective, much more confusion than it has clarity. As Dr. Smith presented clearly in his email, a student is violating the honor code by “Using, uploading, downloading, or purchasing any online resource that has been derived from material pertaining to a Baylor course without the written permission of the professor” (Baylor University, 2018, III.C.16). A student now may only use an online resource with written professor permission. Despite Dr. Smith’s attempt to explain that online resource like Quizlet can still be used in the correct context, this modification of the honor code, at least in my personal sphere of influence in Baylor science, became known as “the Quizlet ban.” Based on the students that I know personally, many if not most students seem to have been using Quizlet and similar resources to study since early high school, and very few have felt compelled to request written permission from a professor for such a common tool. Perhaps because students have not been requesting permission from professors for the use of online resources, I have yet to meet a professor who has ever specifically given students permission to use Quizlet in their syllabus or otherwise. Are all students who make their own personal flashcards virtually without written permission now in violation of the honor code? III.C.16 also leaves much room for interpretation.

What does “pertaining to a Baylor course” mean? Say a student uses Google to search the definition of mitosis in his or her genetics class. Does mitosis “pertain” to genetics? Is that student now in violation of the honor code if they do not first obtain written permission from the professor allowing them to use the search engine? One major purpose of this thesis is to investigate whether this update to the honor code has cast a net too broadly in an attempt to crack down on internet cheating. Through a review of the current literature on cheating and a series of interviews with fellow Baylor students, I will present a glimpse into the academic integrity culture on campus, point out the ambiguities I discovered with which students still wrestle, and suggest an honor code amendment as well as some new policies and procedures to help minimize cheating and maximize learning and character growth for Baylor students.

### *The Source of my Interest*

Academic Integrity first caught my attention as a student in high school. I attended a healthcare-focused academy for advance science and math classes with peers who professed dreams of becoming surgeons all while using their smart phones under their desks to search the internet for the answers to their biology tests. I had heard stories of the Baylor honor council—a group half composed of students that reviewed honor code violations—but I was unable to convince the headmaster of my school that having an honor council would benefit the academy. After one semester of attending Baylor myself, I applied for a position on the honor council through the Office of Academic Integrity, and few things have taught me more about student motivation, the value of integrity, and the

great utility and difficulty of self-examination in the seven semesters that I have served on the council since. Although I once saw academic integrity policy simply as a means to punish guilty students, I now see it as an opportunity to do much more. A consistent system of academic integrity can help students learn to love honest work for themselves—acting with integrity out of passion and personal virtue instead of out of fear. In addition, it can discourage and even prevent cheating, creating less need for discipline in the first place.

By the time I graduate in May 2020, I will have voted in over forty hearings in my seven semesters on the Baylor honor council. I have seen hearings for everything from wrongly accused students who were found innocent, to students accused of forging obituaries of family members and found unanimously guilty. Some students leave their hearings just as they came. Other students, especially those that confess dishonesty, inspire me with what seems to be great moments of clarity. It is as if, for the first time, they see themselves clearly in the mirror, and instead of pretending to be a misunderstood person of integrity, they confess that they are not the honest person that they thought they were. Such confessions remind of Paul in Romans 7:15 who writes, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (NIV). This is, to me, great evidence of a will change: an honest self-reflection. As honor council members, we often talk about “pivot moments”—an effortful switch from a path of dishonesty and future trouble to a path of integrity even in the face of difficulty. It is as if students with habits of dishonesty are speeding up on a road that ends with a brick wall. While the consequences of dishonesty in college can

be severe, they do not nearly compare to the potential consequences of cheating in the workplace, with finances, or in relationships. As an honor council, we feel as if our sanction recommendations to the provost can serve as road bumps: little hills in the road to slow students down on the road of dishonesty, to warn them of the dangers ahead, and to urge them to “pivot” and travel down a different road. This is the value of an effective academic integrity policy: it protects students when they behave honestly, and it motivates and inspires them when they cheat.

### *Question of Inquiry*

The current literature on academic integrity extensively examines cheating rates, student motivation, and course designs that effectively reduce academic dishonesty. It fails, however, to comment much on the inappropriate use of online resources for purposes other than plagiarism. Test banks, either purchased or student-created, can easily be shared between students—and, incredibly, in a manner that does not seem to feel as egregious to students as other forms of cheating such as copying from a neighbor during an exam. As my literature review chapter will demonstrate, although the literature extensively addresses the relationship between students’ perceptions of their peers and their own willingness to cheat, it does not explore whether an honor code that is written out-of-sync with common student practice can be responsible for leading students to believe that their friends are cheaters.

Before we dive into my particular question of intrigue, however, we must first settle how I will be using the more slippery and elusive terms in this field of study: cheating, dishonesty, academic integrity, and an honor code violation.

Merriam-Webster defines the verb to “cheat” as the following: “to violate rules dishonestly” (“Cheat,” n.d.). Although violating the rules is usually quite obvious with Baylor’s clear honor code, the term “dishonesty” leaves room for gray area in the minds of students. For the sake of this project, we will define dishonesty as it relates to cheating as the intentional disobedience of university or professor rules in the attempt to gain some sort of academic advantage. The Baylor Honor code equates academic dishonesty with “dishonorable conduct” and gives 16 specific examples of what such conduct might look like (Baylor University, 2018). In this thesis, academic integrity at Baylor is behavior that is entirely free of cheating (and *should therefore not violate the honor code*), and an honor code violation is when a student violates Baylor’s standards of “utmost honesty and integrity” (Baylor University, 2018) and is found guilty by the honor council or other authorities in the appellate process. I will use words such as dishonesty, cheating, and honor code violations mostly interchangeably, but we will soon learn in the results chapter that many students think these terms are not always the same; violating the honor code, for example, may not be cheating in the minds of students who do not believe the honor code was written accurately.

The main research question I use (which can be found with its sub questions in Appendix A) asks if students perceive their friends as cheaters because of the way they use online resources. The link, as we will learn from McCabe, Butterfield, and Treviño (2012) in the literature review, between student perception of their peers and their own willingness to behave dishonestly is potentially clear: students who believe that their friends are cheating (or would at



least believe that their friends would approve of academic dishonesty) are much more likely to cheat than those who feel the opposite about their peers (p. 114). The factors that contribute to that perception of peers, and in particular whether the university can convince its students of the integrity of their peers, remains unaddressed. If a school sets a clear standard for academic honesty using an honor code, and a student's peers act in contrary to the standard, the student will perceive that their peers are cheating. That much is clear. But what if a student perceives their peers to be acting honestly, and then the university alters its honor code in such a way that reclassifies the behavior of the student's peers as a violation of academic integrity? It seems that one of a few results will follow. Either the student is convinced that the honor code really does accurately describe academic dishonesty and now perceives their friends to be cheaters by logical necessity, or their perception of their peers remains unchanged, but the student no longer believes that the honor code is a realistic, accurate, or authoritative code of ethics. In the first of these two options, the student now believes that his or her friends are cheaters which increases the likelihood that they will behave dishonestly in the future. In the latter option, the student has lost respect for the university honor code and, also according to McCabe et. al. (2012) as we will see, has an increased risk of academic dishonesty (p. 180). In an unlikely third possible outcome, the student could, by their own convictions, no longer consider their peers to be friends (and we will look at Ariely's (2012) research on such an "outgroup" [pp. 206-207]) so that he neither loses respect for the honor code nor gains the belief that his peers are cheating. Such an outcome seems to be unlikely,

but the interviews of this project should reveal if that is how students at Baylor cope with the honor code. Finally, the student could illogically believe both that his friends are behaving honestly and that the honor code that condemns their behavior is a respectable document that accurately describes dishonest behavior. Such cognitive dissonance would surely require a lack of exposure to the honor code that would defeat the whole purpose of a school having their standards in a clearly written document. This peculiar scenario of a school altering its definition of cheating in a way that bans common student practice has yet to be explored in the academic integrity literature and is the central focus of this thesis project.

The sub questions of the research project dive into the factors that might contribute to a student's perception of his or her peers. The first asks about student perception of the Baylor honor code. This is relevant because, if students observes their peers acting in violation of the honor code and yet maintains that their friends are not cheaters, it could be that they do not believe that the honor code authoritatively defines cheating. Perhaps, in their minds, "cheating" and "violating the honor code" are not the same thing. This idea will be explored more in the review of McCabe, Butterfield, and Treviño's (2012) research which found that campuses with respected honor codes and a culture that values academic integrity have less cheating. The second sub question explores students' current uses of online resources. This dimension of the project is largely left out of the current literature and is highly Baylor specific. This question is particularly valuable because it will help establish a beginning understanding of "common student practice" so that it will be clear whether or not the current honor code and

its recent changes defines said behavior as cheating. Third, this project explores student perception of their peers' uses of online resources and asks how this perception is formed. This information is required in order to study the link between how Baylor's honor code defines cheating and the students' perception of peer dishonesty. The final sub question asks about the factors that students consider before making an ethical choice. This question will help uncover the specific motivations of some of the students at Baylor.

The following chapter will look at what current cheating literature has to say concerning these questions and their relevant issues. Chapter three will then cover the method of my research, explaining the style, procedure, and limits of the project. Next, I will present the relevant themes from the results of my data collection in a fourth chapter. Finally, this thesis will conclude with a discussion chapter in which I will draw conclusions from the interview data through the lens of the cheating literature and offer suggestions to Baylor on how to combat academic integrity in the age of the internet.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

The following literature covers many of the issues and interests relevant to academic integrity today. First, the big picture: I will summarize what today's cheating experts have to say about how the world fairs today in terms of academic integrity. Who cheats? How much? And why should we care? We will start with these questions. Next, I will review answers to the question "why?" and consider the relevant factors that literature says can influence student behavior. I will focus on the malleable factors—the ones a student, classroom, or university can alter in order to reduce the temptation to cheat. In the following section, I will discuss how the classroom and its instructor can respond to an age of rampant cheating. I will also look at the literature's recommendations on how to construct a course that encourages to become honest people. Finally, I will consider honor codes: what they need to be effective, and the disillusionment that signals when they are not.

#### *The Big Picture*

##### *Academic Integrity Matters*

I will begin with McCabe, Butterfield, and Treviño (2012) who explain why cheating matters and why the study of cheating behavior is important in his book *Cheating in College*. In the first chapter they write the following:

Academic integrity means a lot, especially when viewed as a barometer of the general ethical inclinations of the rising generation. We view academic integrity as a harbinger of things to come, a reflection of the general mores that society is passing on to the next generation. (p. 3)

Understanding cheating is important because it can be an indicator of future unethical behavior. But are college students even capable of ethical development or are they simply stuck in their ways? “Research has long demonstrated,” explains McCabe et. al. (2012), addressing this question, “that the college years represent a period of significant moral development” (p. 5). This claim is pivotal to the advice found in *Cheating in College* (as well as the much of the other relevant literature) which has much more to do with developing honest students than with preventing cheating by any means necessary. In fact, McCabe et. al. (2012) even claim that educators have a moral obligation to guide students towards ethical behavior, writing: “We have a moral obligation to teach our students that it is possible and preferable to live and operate in an environment of trust and integrity where cheating is simply unacceptable” (p. 165). Unacceptable. Not impossible. The goal then is to create honest students, not just to develop a system that prevents dishonesty. If a school makes dishonesty prevention the primary goal, such an “orientation will lead only to a fear-based cheating culture (rather than an aspirational culture of integrity) in which students are motivated only to avoid getting caught” (McCabe et. al., 2012, p. 174). McCabe et. al. (2012) say forming a culture that guides students to become ethical people should be the aim of academic integrity policies, but they qualify this by arguing that this culture must also be balanced by “rule compliance” and appropriate consequences when someone violates the cultural values of honesty (p. 187).

### *Cheating Rates*

James Lang (2013) begins his book *Cheating Lessons* exploring the rates at which students cheat. He starts such an endeavor by dismantling a commonly held misconception: that cheating is much worse now than it used to be. Through a review of an array of self-report surveys in large scale studies since the 1960's, he points out that the anonymously surveyed students that admit to explicit examples of cheating have been the clear majority for the past several decades (Lang, 2013, p. 13). Not only has cheating failed to increase as one might guess it has, but there is even some research to suggest that it is decreasing (although, this could be just due to continued discrepancy over cheating definitions and “concerns about the confidentiality of the electronic [survey]” [Lang, 2013, p. 14]). Cheating, then, is not some new phenomenon that uniquely plagues this generation of students. Instead, it is an old problem that is as severe as it has always been.

A large portion of the surveys that have formed the basis of our knowledge of academic integrity on school campuses were administered by Donald McCabe (McCabe et. al., 2012). He conducted much of his research by giving surveys to all sorts of schools with questions that ask students about their cheating habits, their willingness to report cheating, their peer perception of cheating, the seriousness of different classic forms of cheating, and many other things concerning the characteristics of students and the environments of classrooms and cultures. His research functioned as a continuation of the pioneering work of Bower's (1964), allowing him to make his longitudinal claims

(McCabe et. al., 2012). In the surveys of McCabe et. al (2012), they avoid relying on students' own definitions of the word "cheating" by providing these nine specific examples of cheating behavior:

copying a few sentences of material without footnoting them in a paper; 'padding' a few item on a bibliography...; plagiarizing from public material in preparing a paper; getting exam questions or answers (ahead of time) from someone who has already taken the same exam; copying from another student on a test or exam...; working on the same homework with several students when the teacher does not allow it; turning in a paper done entirely or in part by another student(s)' giving answers to other students during an exam; and using (unpermitted or unauthorized) [cheat sheets] during an exam. (p. 3)

From these questions, McCabe et. al. (2012) have determined that over 67% of college students have cheated (or done one of the above nine behaviors) at least once in the past year (p. 2). Extending their surveys to high school students revealed that cheating was even more prevalent in ninth through twelfth grade (2012, p. 15), and comparing their data to Bower's (1964) comparable data from the 1960's revealed that the rate of cheating has largely stayed the same through the years or, if anything, has decreased (2012, p. 57). The perceived pervasiveness of cheating in the newest generations is better explained by a change in the form of cheating. According to McCabe et. al. (2012), students today are far more likely to cheat through unauthorized collaboration than by sharing information with a partner while taking a test (p. 54).

### *Who Cheats?*

One question that McCabe, Butterfield, and Treviño's (2012) survey research sought to answer was one of the characteristics of dishonest students—who cheats. They explain that with this knowledge one can understand the nature

of cheating better, but one can also know the sorts of students to monitor more closely. For example, the low and high extremes of the GPA distribution tend to self-report cheating the most in surveys (McCabe. et. al., 2012, p. 84). This is likely because of the pressures to pass and the pressures to compete for graduate schools and to defend an unblemished transcript. Extracurricular involvement and fraternity or sorority involvement are also predictors of academic dishonesty. An inverse relationship between age and dishonesty has also presented itself consistently in McCabe, Butterfield, and Treviño's (2012) research; younger college students are more likely than older students to cheat (p. 82). Just to note an interesting difference, this trend does not appear to be exactly the case at Baylor University. In the past few years, freshmen have indeed had the most academic integrity violations, but they have often been followed closely by seniors—not sophomores. Do Baylor seniors face unique pressures to cheat? Perhaps as expected, high religiosity, courage, empathy, and honesty all negatively correlate with self-reported cheating (McCabe, 2012, p. 88). In addition, men report higher rates of cheating than women, but McCabe et. al. (2012) explain that this is largely explained by cultural differences in the male-dominated and female-dominated disciplines:

The data suggest that, within similar majors, gender differences in cheating are typically very small...higher levels of cheating were found among women in engineering than among women in other majors, and women majoring in engineering reported cheating at rates comparable to those for male engineering majors (p. 74)

Because of these findings, McCabe et. al (2012) claim that “the traditional belief that men self-report more cheating than women is no longer a supportable



conclusion” (p.76). While intrinsic qualities can be helpful for understanding who cheats, they do not have nearly the predictive power as situational factors such as classroom environment or peer perception (McCabe et. al., 2012, p. 73). This is excellent news—the factors that are most malleable by Baylor professors are also the factors that have the biggest impact on student ethical behavior.

### *Factors of Cheating*

I will now turn to the malleable influences on student dishonesty. James Lang (2013) wrote that contextual factors that lead to cheating are far more important than dispositional factors. Dispositional factors, such as age, peer-group, and high school background cannot practically be manipulated. Instead, I will focus on the contextual factors that lead to cheating—malleable things like course design and professor strategies that can be used to bring out the best in students independent of dispositional factors. I will also look at factors specific to student psychology such as the irrationality of cheating and how psychological distance, self-deception, and peer perception can influence a student’s willingness to act dishonestly.

### *Irrational Cheating*

In his book *The (Honest) Truth About Dishonesty*, Dan Ariely (2012) attempts to dismantle the traditional Simple Model of Rational Crime (or SMORC)—a model that treats all human decisions as simple cost-benefit analyses—and replace it with his more nuanced and context specific “Fudge Factor” theory. As we will see, Ariely’s (2012) fudge factor theory explains why

it is essential that students have trust in the honor code and that they believe their friends to be honest; both allow students to justify dishonesty to themselves much more easily. Through cheating experiments set up mostly in university settings, Ariely examines the SMORC one variable at a time and determines that it is often an inaccurate predictor of human behavior and that policies intended to decrease dishonesty based on the SMORC model will be ineffective and potentially harmful (2012).

A rational model of dishonesty (such as the SMORC) posits that humans make decisions based on cost-benefit analyses (Ariely, 2012, p. 4). Essentially, humans weigh the potential rewards of dishonesty (say, a pocket full of cash from a robbery or an inflated grade from cheating) against the potential punishment and the probability of getting caught and punished. Ariely (2012) explains early on, “By comparing the first components (the gain) with the last two components (the costs), the rational human being can determine whether committing a particular crime is worth it or not” (p. 14). The method, according to this model, to fight dishonesty effectively is to ramp up the costs and reduce the rewards. Harsh, automatic, and blanket punishments. High surveillance. These are the responses to dishonesty that a rational theory of human behavior like the SMORC would necessitate. But what if humans do not make decisions about honesty based on a rational cost-benefit analysis? If they do not, says Ariely (2012), then these commonsense attempts to curb cheating will be “inefficient and insufficient” (p. 5). To test this rational theory of cheating, Ariely subjected students to a matrix

test in a litany of different context to find what sorts of things make students cheat and what sorts of things keep them honest.

The matrix test is a simple, five-minute mathematical test that Ariely (2012) incentivized students to take with cash rewards. The test is comprised of twenty problems, and each problem is a matrix of twelve 3-digit numbers between 0.00 and 9.99. In each matrix, only two of the twelve numbers would add up to a sum of ten; it was the students' job to find these two numbers in each of the matrices. Because there are twelve elements in each matrix, finding the two numbers that add up to a sum of ten requires an inordinate amount of comparisons. In fact, if a student just systematically compared one element to the next in an organized fashion and did not find the match until the last possible comparison, the student would make nearly 40 million mental comparison before he found the solution to just the first matrix (the number is actually 39,916,800 comparisons or eleven factorial). The nature of the matrix test, therefore, largely eliminates the problem of differing mathematic abilities amongst students (beyond a certain threshold of mental math ability) and instead makes the time spent with a matrix by far the limiting factor in finding the solutions. No amount of calculus understanding will help a participant search a matrix faster. Because of this fact, the variation between students was presumably minimal. To get a baseline understanding of student performance, Ariely (2012) paid students 50 cents for every matrix they answered correctly in 5 minutes, and on average students earned 2 dollars, answering 4 of the 20 matrices correctly (p.18). In the next group of students, the participants were given the same matrix test and also

the answer key after the 5 minutes so that the students themselves could grade the test and not the proctor. After grading their tests, students were asked to shred their matrix tests in the back of the room and report the number of matrices they correctly solved to the test proctor in order to receive their cash reward. In the shredder group, the average student take-home pay was 3 dollars, meaning that, on average, students claimed to have solved six matrices, exaggerating by two (Ariely, 2012, p. 18). “And this overall increase,” writes Ariely (2012), “did not result from a few individuals who claimed to solve a lot more matrices, but from lots of people who cheated by just a little bit” (p. 18).

This little bit of cheating by lots of people could surely be explained by the Simple Model of Rational Crime. By shredding the papers in the back of the room, students were eliminating the chance of anyone knowing about their dishonesty. And surely none of the students expected the punishment for being caught cheating on a low-stakes, volunteer math experiment to be very severe anyway. The gain of the extra money far exceeded the costs in this situation and many students decided to behave dishonestly, but does this rational model of cheating hold up to scrutiny? According to such a model, the amount of cheating should increase if the potential gains of dishonesty increase (with no change in the punishment for cheating or the probability of getting caught). To test this, Ariely (2012) conducted the same shredder-matrix test but with a 25 cent, 50 cent, 1 dollar, 2 dollar, 5 dollar, and even 10 dollar reward for each correctly solved matrix. Unlike the SMORC would have predicted, cheating levels remained exactly the same; students on average reported that they had solved six matrices

correctly. In fact, students actually cheated *less* in the group offered 10 dollars per correct answer. Ariely (2012) explains that “This insensitivity to the amount of reward suggests that dishonesty is most likely not an outcome of a cost-benefit analysis. If it were, the increase in the benefit (the amount of money offered) would lead to more cheating” (p. 19).

After manipulating the benefit of cheating and finding no change in cheating rates, Ariely (2012) varied the costs. Instead of altering the punishment for cheating, Ariely turned the probability that students would be caught in the act up and down. In a variation of the shredder-matrix test, Ariely had a group of students shred only half of their test so as to increase (at least in the minds of the students) the odds of being caught in a lie as they self-reported their performance. In another group, and to decrease the odds of being caught even further than in the regular shredder test, students were asked to destroy their matrix tests and to then take their reward out of a bowl of cash, giving them the opportunity to take much more than they had earned with no supervision. In both of these scenarios, the amount of cheating was unchanged. On average, students claimed to have solved 6 matrices correctly: two more than the students solved in the baseline test with no cheating. According to Ariely (2012), “these results suggest that the probability of getting caught doesn’t have a substantial influence on the amount of cheating” (p. 21). Another way to decrease the perceived odds that a student will be caught cheating is to make their cheating seem less out of the ordinary. To one shredder-matrix group, Ariely told participants that students, on average, correctly solve four matrices, but to another group he told participants that the average of

correct answers was eight. If students were concerned only for standing out and getting caught cheating, surely they would have reported more matrices solved after being told the average was eight. A higher average means more room for cheating, right? But they did not. Instead, Ariely (2012) found no change in the amount of reported correct answers (p. 22). Even when students were told that the average number of correct answers was eight, they still only inflated their average correct of four up to six. In yet another variation of the matrix test, Ariely planted a student-actor amongst the participants to ask a question after the proctor had explained the matrix test. His question clarified to the other students that they could indeed claim to have answered all twenty matrices and walk out with their money (in this particular experiment, students were given the money in an envelope and asked to return the cash that they had not earned). The proctor confirmed to the actor that he had understood the test correctly, “And after observing the experimenter telling [the actor] that he could do what he wanted, cheating actually *decreased*. That was the opposite of what would have happened if our participants had engaged solely in a rational cost-benefit analysis” (Ariely, 2012, p. 203). With every aspect of the SMORC dismantled, Ariely (2012) attempts to replace with a model that actually explains human dishonesty. His model, the fudge factor, is essential to understanding why Baylor students cheat and how sensitive they may be to the actions of the Baylor Office of Academic Integrity.

### *The Fudge Factor*

Ariely (2012) argues that something else other than simply the costs and benefits must be measured in human decision making. “Our behavior,” he writes, “is driven by two opposing motivations. On one hand, we want to view ourselves as honest, honorable people...On the other hand, we want to benefit from cheating and get as much money as possible” (Ariely, 2012, p. 27). This is the basis of the fudge factor theory: that humans will cheat as much as possible until they can no longer feel good about themselves. The difference between how honest we actually are and how honest we convince ourselves that we are is what Ariely calls the fudge factor. The odds of a person cheating according to this model have much less to do with the cost-benefit analysis and much more to do with the ease of self-justification. Using his matrix test and a myriad of other experiments, Ariely examined the influences that push and pull on the fudge factor.

### *Psychological Distance*

One of the influences that increases the fudge factor and therefore one’s self-justification ability is psychological (and sometimes even physical) distance from money (Ariely, 2012). In another iteration of his shredder-matrix experiment, Ariely had students self-report their test scores in exchange for tokens instead of actual dollars and then, a few feet away at a different table, exchange their tokens into dollars. With just a simple conversion to tokens before students were handed the money, Ariely (2012) found that the amount students were willing to cheat *doubled* (pp. 33-34). Because students were no longer directly

lying for dollar bills, it became much easier to take extra tokens without feeling like too dishonest of a person. This, Ariely explains, is because of the psychological distance between the dishonesty and the cash reward. Stealing products (or, in the case of the Baylor Honor Code, grades) is psychologically much easier to justify than stealing money. Ariely conducted another experiment where he left a 12-pack of soda in a dormitory refrigerator along with, perhaps humorously, a paper plate of dollar bills. After 72 hours, every soda was gone but not a single dollar had been taken. A soda is much easier to steal because it “does not explicitly reference monetary value” (Ariely, 2012, p. 32). In survey data about the game of golf, Ariely found that golfers were much more willing to dishonestly improve their golf game the larger the distance their actions were from the ball. Golfers were half as likely to improve a ball’s position by moving it with their hand than by tapping it with their foot, and they were most willing by far to adjust the ball with a tap of their club (Ariely, 2012, p. 59). The farther the ball was from their hand, the easier the behavior was to justify to oneself and the more willing golfers were to act dishonestly. These same concepts of psychological distance apply to all sorts of non-monetary things that people are dishonest about. Slightly inflating the numbers on a timecard, over-reporting volunteer hours, exaggerating insurance claims, cheating on a school assignment, or stealing company stocks are all much easier for regular, “good” people to justify to themselves because it does not *feel* as if one is taking money.



### *Emphasis on Performance*

An emphasis on performance instead of content mastery or skill can also induce people to be dishonest and students to cheat. Lang (2013) writes:

A performance-oriented learning environment places the emphasis on students doing well on the specific performances established by the evaluator. This type of classroom lends itself not only to cheating but also to students focusing on things like test-taking strategies (i.e., to guess or not guess on a multiple-choice exam) instead of actually learning the material. (p. 88)

Notice the inverse relationship between cheating and learning; course designs that tend to induce cheating through high pressure emphasis on few performances are the same sorts of designs that decrease real learning in their pressure to “learn it for the test.” Examinations and assignments must be the means by which a student learns and demonstrates his learning, but not the end in themselves.

### *High Stakes*

High stakes in the classroom can induce students to cheat as seen in a survey by George Diekhoff (1999) given to American and Japanese students that produced results directly counter to the researcher’s hypothesis. Because of the undeniable individualism of American culture, Diekhoff and his colleagues believed that American students would feel less pressure to conform to communal norms of academic integrity when compared to the Japanese students. The survey, however, found that the self-reported cheating rate by the Japanese students was more than double that of the American students. To explain this massive diversion from their hypothesis, the Diekhoff (1999) writes this:

The Japanese student whose academic success is evaluated by his or her performance on a single major exam may well experience more pressure

to cheat than does the American student whose grade is based on a series of shorter exams, quizzes, homework assignments, and the like. (p. 351)

On average in Japan, professors monitor attendance less and give assignments far less frequently, heightening the pressure per exam (Diekhoff, 1999). This elevation of the stakes on exams is likely at least part of the explanation of the cheating discrepancy between Japanese and American students.

### *Extrinsic Motivation*

Lang (2013) describes another factor of cheating that likely explains the copious cheating in large, introductory courses: extrinsic motivation. To explain his point, Lang describes the Chinese civil service exams that were so wrought with cheating. Young Chinese citizens would take a series of tests practically as an audition for highly lucrative government jobs, but the tests were measures of memory and other mental competencies. Citizens would see the information needed to excel on the civil service exam not as meaningful or independently good things to know but as a means to an end. Lang (2013) writes,

One can hardly imagine a Chinese exam taker passing all of the exams that would earn him a civil service position and then deciding to return to his village and spend the rest of his days as a shopkeeper. The point of taking the exams was to win the prize, not do well on the exam. (p. 31)

When student focus changes from the task itself to the rewards completion of the task may provide, cheating increases. The pressure that public school teachers felt after the No Child Left Behind Act is another great example of extrinsic motivation (Lang, 2013, p. 29). Teachers were motivated to produce higher performing classes, not out of a personal desire to do so, but out of the fear of losing their jobs or having their school taken over by the federal government. This

extrinsic motivation for performance led one particular school district in Atlanta to pursue the goal through alternative and dishonest means. In a scandal that involved 178 educators, teachers modified student answers on standardized tests and deliberately sat poor-performing students next to high-performing students so that they could share answers (Koebler, 2011). Extrinsic motivation, especially in Atlanta, did not inspire teachers to do their jobs better. Instead, it pushed them to pursue results, and the path to success became secondary to the success itself.

### *Low Expectations of Success*

Low expectations of success can also create a classroom environment that induces cheating. In an experiment conducted by Piazza, Bering, and Ingram (2011), children were asked to hit a target with a Velcro ball standing 6 feet away, facing the opposite direction, and thrown with their nondominant hand. Interestingly, children who *believed* that they were alone cheated much more than the children who *believed* that they weren't. Also, the level of cheating was indistinguishable between the group of children who performed the task with a woman in the room and the group of children who expressed belief in the magical "Princess Alice" when the researchers told them that she would be watching. The transcendent implications of this study seemed to concern James Lang (2013), who wrote about this same study by Piazza et. al. (2011), less than the fact that an impossible task induced the children to cheat.

### *Self-Deception*

Interestingly, Ariely (2012) found that our own cheating may often go unnoticed by us because of our ability in self-deception. In a similar test to the matrix test, participants were given a test with answers ahead of time (but were asked not to look at the answers until it was time to grade the test). Naturally, students in the group with the answers provided in advance claimed to score higher than those in the control group without the extra help. However, when the students who used the answers to achieve a higher score were told that they would be taking a similar test *without* the answers provided in advance, they predicted that their scores would be just as high as they were before—as if they were unaware that their first score had been inflated by their access to the answers. Ariely found these same results even when he incentivized an accurate prediction with money. Participants were unable to recognize that they had glanced at the answers they were not supposed to see and convinced themselves that they had come up with the answer on their own. Clearly, self-identifying as an honest student (although such an identity could shrink one's fudge factor) does not guarantee that one is behaving honestly. A Baylor student could be acting in clear violation of the honor code and never consider themselves a dishonest person.

### *Peer Perception*

Concerning the different factors and their predictive abilities for academic dishonesty, McCabe et. al. (2012) explain Bowers' perspective writing,

Of the many personal and contextual influences that he studied, Bowers concluded that peer disapproval, an obvious form of peer influence, was “the most important determinant of changes in cheating behavior between

high school and college (Bowers, 1964, p. 196)” Students were much less likely to cheat in college if they perceived that their peers would disapprove. (p. 114)

And in his own research, McCabe et. al. found that peer approval of cheating, that perceived peer cheating, and that a weak perception of the community’s understanding of academic integrity were strong predictors of academic dishonesty. Students who perceived that their peers would strongly disapprove of cheating were 40 percentage points less likely to cheat than students who felt their peers would only weakly disapprove. *No other factor studied in McCabe’s book has the power to drop cheating rates from the low 70’s to about 30% like peer disapproval* (McCabe et. al., 2012, p. 117). The lowest cheating rate average among schools with strong traditional honor codes was only 48% (McCabe et. al., 2012, p. 93)—clearly peer approval has a large impact on student dishonesty. Finally, as a combination of both peer perception and expectations of success, students who took the cheating surveys were likely to convince themselves that, if other students were cheating, then cheating was an acceptable way of making sure their grade did not fall below the grades of others (McCabe et. al., 2012, p. 118).

James Lang (2013) also wrote about the gravity of peer perception and students’ willingness to cheat. Given this connection, it seems that a poorly modified honor code has the potential to do harm. For example, if the honor code is abruptly modified (without student involvement) to condemn a common student practice, a student aware of this common practice could begin to believe that his or her peers are now violating the honor code and perhaps be more likely to cheat because of it. If this were the case, then careful attention would need to be paid to

the creation and modification of honor codes within a culture of established student habits. Such a phenomenon is the main focus of this project's interview questions.

Like McCabe and Lang, Ariely (2012) also discussed the impact of peer perception of cheating, and he tested it with his matrix test. Ariely had an actor stand up after a minute of his classic shredder-matrix test and walk out without returning any of the money he was given in an envelope at the beginning of the test (therefore obviously claiming to have solved all twenty matrices in just one minute). The impact of this actor's actions on the participants largely depended on the sweater that the actor was wearing. When he wore the sweater of that particular school's rival college, cheating plummeted. Being from the rival school put the actor in the participants out-group--"We're not like *him!*" However, when the actor was wearing some other shirt (and appeared to belong to the same university as the participants), cheating skyrocketed (Ariely, 2012, pp. 206-207). The acceptance of cheating by peers drastically assists students in their attempts to justify their own dishonesty to themselves. This makes me concerned for the cheating at Baylor because of the new modifications to the honor code. Although the precedence of the honor council says otherwise, students may believe that the newest addition to the Honor code from the summer of 2018 (III.C.16) disallows student resource websites (such as Quizlet) despite their pervasive use by students on campus for years (Baylor University, 2018). If a student is aware of the extent to which their peers use said online tools, and he misinterprets the honor code to believe that these tools are entirely off limits, does he now sense a higher

acceptance of “academic dishonesty” amongst his peers? Does his frustration with the change in the honor code make it easier for him to justify other forms of dishonesty to himself? Has Baylor inadvertently made it more difficult for students to behave honestly? We will explore many of these questions in chapters to come.

### *Classroom Strategies*

#### *Cheating vs. Learning*

James Lang’s (2013) work seems to operate on the assumption of an inverse relationship between cheating and learning—that one inhibits the other and vice versa. Given this relationship, Lang insists that classrooms be designed to both increase learning and discourage, dissuade, and prevent cheating. The two strategies are equally essential, and they are equally mediocre in producing the desired effect on their own. Lang’s work can be used to explain much of how students think about academic integrity, and it is full of practical tips that Baylor could implement to reduce the cheating on campus.

One way to increase learning is with the testing effect (Miller, 2011). In her review of recent cognitive research, Miller described how we are reshaping the way we understand long-term memory. Recent studies in this area have found that failure to remember the material that one learned in a class is more often a failure of recall than of memory storage. The best way to practice memory recall is frequency of retrieval. Long-term memory can be thought of like a large closet. Placing a new item in a vast closet is simple; the difficulty occurs when one wants

to *find* it. Researchers have found that traditional studying leads to much lower rates of long-term retention than simply taking tests because the former places emphasis on memory formation while the second practices memory retrieval. Karpicke and Roediger (2008), through their research on memory related to the testing effect, conclude that “testing (and not studying) is the critical factor for promoting long-term recall” (p. 967). Lang (2013) also writes about the testing effect, explaining that testing students more often will not only relieve some of the pressure on students to cheat but it will also make up for any lost class time through its development of long-term retention. Through the testing effect, Lang again makes clear his claim of the inverse relationship between cheating and learning. Practices that promote learning (such as the testing effect) have the bonus effect of reducing cheating in the process.

### *Mastery Orientation*

Lang (2013) uses young athletes and hoops as a metaphor for students and assignments to explain how a mastery-oriented classroom can reduce the pressure on student to cheat. Suppose, he explains, that you decide to test the overall dexterity and physical ability of the students with the single task of jumping through a hoop once. While an athlete would certainly have to have some sort of ability to successfully complete the task, this test would fail to showcase the abilities of others who were more gifted in pull-ups or sprinting. A mastery-orientation would allow each gymnast to choose how to demonstrate their new skills. The same is true for the academic classroom. “[Tasks which] give students a sense of control over either the process or product,” psychologist Carole Ames



(1992) writes in her article on classroom structures, “are more likely to create an intrinsic purpose to learning” (p. 264). Students are drawn to the mastery of a discipline when given freedom to pursue it in a way that intrigues and inspires them. In a later chapter, we will discuss whether students feel as if their classroom resources inspire them to master content or just lead them to, often dishonest, grade-maintenance behavior.

### *More Assignments*

To counter the problem of cheating induced by high stakes, Lang (2013) describes course designs that have more assignments, quizzes, and tests and lower “risk” on each to a student’s grade. He writes, “the more exams (or quizzes) you give to your students, with lower stakes, the less likely they are to cheat” (Lang, 2013, p. 104). But more tests and quizzes mean more opportunities for students to cheat, right? Academic dishonesty must have less to do with the opportunity to cheat than the pressure to do so.

An increase in the number tests and quizzes can help decrease the stakes felt by students in a class, but Lang suggests several other classroom techniques to accomplish this goal (2013). He describes a professor named Boyer who allows students to take each quiz twice and to retain only the higher of the two scores. Lang recommends frequency quizzing in any form: online (although, later we discuss the drawbacks of graded online assignments at Baylor), with clickers, even active dialogue in a classroom will give a student opportunity to practice the long-term memory retrieval that they need to increase long-term retention and decrease the drive to cheat. This shift from testing for the sake of grading to

testing for the sake of learning seems to transform a classroom from a place in which one must *prove* that they are already capable of advancement to a place in which one *becomes* capable of advancement. A professor interested in discouraging cheating and encouraging cheating should give students every chance he or she can to practice “retrieval and rehearsal of the information” (Lang, 2013, p. 125).

The sort of course design that Lang describes is atypical. It requires effort, updates, and creativity—three taxing things to ask of professors with large, required, introductory classes that have little to do with the research and publication expectations of their institution. Large, required, introductory courses seem to be the perfect storm. Having many students makes cheating more difficult to monitor and “an instructor might be tempted to manage her time commitments by falling back on infrequent, traditional forms of assessment: a few multiple-choice exams along the way, a final, and maybe a research paper” (Lang, 2013, p. 117). Without the effort to design a creative class setup, professors will likely conform to traditional strategies that encourage cheating.

### *Intrinsic Motivation*

Lang (2013) recommends a few things to foster intrinsic motivation in a classroom. To start, he points out that students will buy in to course content when it concerns things that they already care about. Practically, this can look like a course driven more by the students’ questions rather than the professor’s. “Inducing puzzlement,” he writes, through relevant “intellectual challenges” helps stimulate personal interest in a course (Lang, 2013, p. 65). An example of this

could be a particular Baylor genetics professor who we will discuss more in chapter five. She presents a case study of a person whose disease breaks previously established rules of inheritance. Instead of simply providing the answer in a long list of facts, this professor challenges students to consider the biological processes they know and examine them for potential points of breakdown, exception, and disease. This form of questioning fosters personal problem solving by students and leads to an interest in the course itself and not just the grade.

### *Uncheatable Assignments*

To foster intrinsic motivation further, Lang (2013) recommends using grounded assessments. These assignments are different each year, unique to their particular semester, and “virtually uncheatable” (Lang, 2013, p. 76). Concerning these cheat-proof assignments, he writes,

courses that depend upon community service learning, or any kind of major event or interaction with others, lend themselves automatically to grounded assessments—perhaps our best defense against cheating... You can use highly cheating-resistant grounded assessments in any course with just a little bit of creative thinking. (Lang, 2013, p. 76)

The four ways to ground an assessment is by connecting it with the time, with a place, with students personally, or with another course (Lang, 2013). Grounding an assessment with time would look like requiring students to write a paper using an article published in the last three months. Not only does this make the information immediately relevant, but it also assures that no such essay has been written before (making plagiarism much more difficult). To ground an assignment in a place, Lang mentions that some courses require their students to give a public

presentation at an elementary school or a nursing home. When there is at least a chance that students will need to *teach* course information to another group of people, learning the content becomes the only means to success. Making assessments personal is another way to ground them. Asking students to reflect on their own personal development or goals creates an assignment that may take more effort to complete dishonestly than to do so honestly. Finally, making assignments interdisciplinary can decrease cheating and foster intrinsic motivation as well. Allowing students to connect content to other things that they have personally learned makes the material more relatable and the assignment more unique. These are all techniques Baylor professors could use in the courses with high suspected uses of internet resources for cheating.

### *Professor Clarity*

If students believe a particular act of cheating is “more serious,” they have a much harder time justifying the behavior and are therefore far less likely to do such a thing. About this belief and the propensity to cheat McCabe et. al. (2012) write, “This inverse relationship between engagement in a behavior and opinion on its seriousness is typical in our sample for virtually all forms of cheating” (p. 59). This trend in the data suggests another tactic to limit cheating—professors must be clear with students about *what cheating is* and also about its seriousness. Along with professors, honor codes can also clarify integrity expectations which help decrease a student’s ability to justify behavior by categorizing it in the “gray area.”

As we have discussed in detail, professors can inadvertently increase the amount a student is willing to cheat. Professors can accomplish this through miscommunication of integrity expectations and ignoring their institution's integrity policies (McCabe et. al., 2012). In a survey of high school students, McCabe et. al. found some drastic differences between student and teacher opinions on certain behaviors. 34% of students considered unpermitted collaboration to not be cheating at all; 0% of teachers agreed. 20% of students considered sharing homework answers with other students to not be cheating at all; 0% of teachers agreed (McCabe et. al., 2012, p. 31). There are obviously some serious discrepancies between the expectations of students and their instructors. While students consider unethical behavior as not cheating or even as trivial cheating, they will be much more likely to justify the behavior and engage in it. Professors may also contribute to the cheating problem when they fail to appropriately address cheating when they observe it. McCabe et. al. cite a study from 1989 in which researchers found that only 33% of professors who had seen a student cheat had actually taken the actions required by their respective campus policy (Jendrek) and another study by Graham et. al. (1994) that found that only 9% of faculty who had witnessed cheating did anything about it (McCabe et. al., 2012, pp. 133-134). McCabe et. al. criticize this lack of action writing, "If faculty members turn a blind eye to cheating and/or refuse to work within established channels, we shouldn't be surprised if students decide that no one really cares about cheating" (McCabe et. al., 2012, p. 142). If "nobody really cares," then justifying dishonest behavior has become much easier. In defense of the

professors, McCabe et. al. explain that many of them feel unempowered by their school integrity policies. Many, for example, feel that they cannot accuse a student of cheating unless the professor can prove the cheating beyond the shadow of a doubt (something difficult to do when students are glancing at each other's test papers). Professors are also slow to report students because of the time and energy that an integrity hearing requires and because 19% end up being dissatisfied with the results of the hearing anyway (McCabe et. al., 2012, p. 134).

### *Instill Self-Efficacy*

Professors can fight students' tendency to give up and cheat by deliberately attempting to convince students that they are capable of a given task and that they are expected to do so. Murdock and Anderman (2006) explain rather hopefully that, "when students have high self-efficacy beliefs and expect to succeed at an academic task, cheating is probably neither a necessary nor a useful strategy" (p. 135). Careful reflection on assignment requirements and avoiding unrealistic expectations can help a professor produce self-efficacy in his or her students, increase student buy-in, and discourage the use of cheating to accomplish goals.

McCabe et. al. also write about how instilling self-efficacy can have a reductional effect on student cheating (2012). Concerning the professor impact on this self-justification ability, McCabe et. al. (2012) write the following:

[Professors may send] mixed messages about the appropriateness of cheating. Our research suggests that this contributes to some students' belief that what many professors consider cheating (e.g. unauthorized collaboration) more accurately falls into an ethical 'gray area.' By appealing to gray areas, and otherwise stretching the definition of 'not

cheating' beyond normal standards, students can often justify or deny any wrongdoing. (p. 8)

Much like Ariely's "Fudge Factor" (2012) research indicates, McCabe et. al. argue that a large part of cheating prevention rests with impairing students' ability to justify unethical behavior (or at least not assist it!) (2012). One way professors can prevent students from justifying cheating is by convincing them that they are capable of succeeding. One common rationale for cheating, McCabe et. al. (2012) note is that students feel they are "just not good" at a particular subject:

Cheating is often further rationalized in these cases by a logic that suggests poor performance in the course will adversely affect their graduate school admission choices, so they have no choice but to cheat to make things 'fair; again—it's the school and its distribution requirements that are responsible for their cheating, not them. (p. 50)

The work of McCabe et. al (2012) makes it clear—students are much less likely to cheat on an assignment when they are convinced that they are capable of success.

### *Ethical Priming*

Next, Ariely (2012) claims that priming people to think morally forces them to recognize their behavior as dishonest, shrinking their fudge factor, their ability to justify a dishonest action, and their likelihood to cheat. In another one of his matrix experiments, he asked participants in one group to recall ten books they had read in high school and participants in another group to recite as many of the Ten Commandments as they could. In the book recall category, participants cheated as much as expected in a typical shredder-matrix set-up, but in the Ten Commandments group cheating was reduced to nothing, "despite the fact that no

one in the group was able to recall all ten” (Ariely, 2012, p. 40). In a similar experiment, Ariely asked a group of self-professed atheists to swear on the Bible before taking the matrix test. Again, the self-reported scores were identical to the baseline matrix test values indicating that the atheists had not inflated their exam score after shredding their tests. Forcing participants to consider morality (even by mere association with a religious text) effectively inhibited their abilities to both act dishonestly and convince themselves of their own good character.

Ariely (2012) found similar effect when he asked students to sign an honor code statement especially, another experiment found, when the statement preceded the self-report. When students were primed to think about a code of conduct and moral expectations *before* they filled out a form of how many matrices they completed, they were far more honest than when they signed at the bottom of the same form. Even students who were falsely convinced that their school had an honor code cheated less after being asked to sign a phony honor code statement (Ariely, 2012). All of these calls to moral thinking effectively shrunk the participants’ fudge factors. Unfortunately, in the experiments that did not involve priming, students from schools with rigorous honor code training and extensive anti-cheating awareness performed no more honestly than their peers from schools without honor codes. This is an important point for Baylor to remember—the presence of an honor code does not negate the serious need for regular reminders about integrity and ethical priming before tests. The honesty of all sorts of students from all sorts of schools in Ariely’s experiments relied mainly on moral priming. To test the effect of priming outside of the university setting,



Ariely was allowed to work with an insurance company claim reports. When he shifted the signature on the statement of accuracy to the beginning of the form, the self-reported “miles driven” (a number that favors clients when higher) dropped by 15%. Ariely (2012) summarized with the following:

When our ability to rationalize our selfish desires increases, so does our fudge factor, making us more comfortable with our own misbehavior and cheating. The other side is true as well; when our ability to rationalize our actions is reduced, our fudge factor shrinks, making us less comfortable with misbehaving and cheating. (p. 53)

If simple moral priming is so effective in reducing (and eliminating) cheating, why is it not universally practiced at a school like Baylor—committed to both Christian commitment and academic excellence? We will discuss potential improvements for Baylor in chapter five.

Some of McCabe, Butterfield, and Treviño’s (2012) research shows that there is a lasting effect to honor codes. While college graduates from honor code schools were not less likely to act unethically at work on their own, they were much more responsive to ethics codes implemented by the company than their peers. This suggests that ethical training is important, but it will only effectively limit cheating behavior if it is followed by ethical priming and reminders.

### *Honor Codes*

Here at Baylor, we have an excellent, accessible honor code, an active Office of Academic Integrity, an informational seminar on integrity at freshmen orientation, an honor council half composed of students, and a required online course for all students covering the most frequent honor code violations. These are all commendable things that help promote campus conversation about

integrity (something James Lang (2013) argued was essential for having an effective academic integrity policy in his book *Cheating Lessons*). However, Ariely's experiments found that students at honor code universities are just as capable of excusing their own dishonesty as students anywhere else (2012). Because of this, professors must be aware that a passive reliance on the university honor code is not an effective way to encourage students to act honestly. Lang (2013) argued that it was essential not to dismiss the first offense of cheaters, and Ariely's (2012) research supported the same claim: a free pass on the first violation may convince students that cheating is not a serious issue which vastly increases their ability to justify dishonesty in the future.

McCabe et. al. (2012) also wrote much about the efficaciousness of honor codes. "Honor codes," they explain, "are effective in promoting integrity and reducing cheating and...are more than mere 'window dressing.' They affect faculty attitudes and behavior and can have an enduring effect" (McCabe et. al., 2012, p. 102). They clarify later that the mere existence of an honor code is not enough. The ideals of academic integrity must be imbedded into the culture in order for an honor code to produce any results in cheating behavior. Because no two codes look alike, McCabe et. al. (2012) considered a school an "honor code school" if it had a code with one or more of the following four elements:

(1) unproctored exams, (2) the use of a written pledge in which students affirm that they have not cheated on a particular assignment, (3) a judicial or hearing body in which students play a major role..., and (4) an expectation that students should report any violations of the code that they may observe. (p. 91)

In their studies from 1990/1991, 1995/1996, and 2005/2006 studies, McCabe et. al. found significant differences between the cheating behavior of students in code and no code schools (2012). Cheating in code schools was found to be as high as 26% lower than cheating in no code schools (McCabe et. al., 2012, p. 100). Honor codes can be used to create cultural norms of integrity, and cultural norms of integrity can decrease students' perception of peer approval of cheating and therefore their ability to justify the cheating behavior to themselves—but the honor code must seep into the culture. In the next chapter, we will look at some of Baylor students' negative views and lack of familiarity with the honor code, and in chapter five we will discuss what Baylor can do to curb them.

### *Disillusionment*

McCabe et. al. (2012) argue that the requirement of students to report other students should be abolished because of their potential to cause disillusionment with the honor code. McCabe et. al. (2012) write the following:

Schools, even those with traditional honor codes, should consider dropping the 'requirement' to report peers... We know that many violations go unreported even through students know they exist. So if we 'require' reporting when we know that most students will ignore the "requirement," we are probably just giving students a rationale to ignore other important aspects of the policy or to be cynical about the entire academic integrity culture. (p. 180)

McCabe et. al. (2012) write that levels of reporting can be as low as 5.5% (meaning that, of the students who have witness cheating, only 5.5% of them admitted to reporting said issue). It seems that if the honor code too strongly opposes the habitual and good-hearted behavior of students it can lead to students failing to buy into the academic integrity system at all. I can imagine a student

thinking, “If the honor code calls me a cheater for not reporting my friends, then I guess I’m a cheater!” If students fail to see the value of the honor code, they will be much more capable of justifying future cheating.

Later, we will explore whether Baylor’s classes’ current use of internet homework may be contributing to disillusionment in its students. Quizlet, for example, is a flash card making website that students tell me all the time that they have been using since they were in high school. Because of recent changes to the honor code, many honest students may begin to believe that the university deems them a cheater because of their fair and good-hearted use of Quizlet. If these students think that their benign internet behavior violates the honor code, surely they may feel disillusioned with the honor code as a whole. “I’m already a cheater, so why not copy others’ homework as well?” Baylor needs a realistic honor code that allows for the fair use of the internet so that students do not feel that common student practice is now cheating. In chapter five, we will discuss how I believe Baylor can make that happen.

### *Conclusion*

The current cheating literature thoroughly covers student motivation, honor code efficaciousness, integrity-inspiring course designs, and the risk factors for academic dishonesty. Present through all the literature that I have examined for this project is this: students who believe their peers cheat and approve of dishonesty are far more likely to cheat than those who do not. The literature does not address a university’s potential to *cause* such a peer perception. The aim of this project’s interview questions is to uncover the perceptions that students carry

of the Baylor honor code and of their peers use of online resources. Given the pervasive use (both honest and dishonest) of online resources that I believe occurs at Baylor, I suspect that Baylor's honor code's stance on the use of online resources has done one of two things. Either students now believe that their friends who use online resources (no matter how honestly) are acting dishonestly and approve of such behavior, or students no longer respect the honor code as an authoritative document on cheating. If either of these are the results of Baylor's honor code that does not seem to quite allow for common student practice, then I fear that Baylor has inadvertently produced major risk factors for academic dishonesty in its students. Even if such were not the case, it is clear from the literature that there is much that Baylor could adopt and require of its professors, from Lang's uncheatable assignments (2013) and Ariely's moral priming (2012) to McCabe, Butterfield, and Treviños's idea that professors *insist* that cheating is a serious issue (2012), that would improve the state of academic integrity on campus and help Baylor more closely live out its commitment to Christian community and academic excellence.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methods

This project over Baylor students' use and perception of online resources is a phenomenological study. In other words, in my analysis of the data, I am not specifically testing a particular theory or hypothesis. Instead, I want to discover the answer to the general question, "How are students' perceptions of their peers' integrity influenced by the use of online resources?" With approval from the Institutional Research Board, I collected the data using semi-structured interviews with 11 Baylor students that I found through a snowball sampling technique, and I analyzed the interviews with a coding method designed arrange the data into groups of discovered trends and themes in the student responses.

#### *Why Phenomenology?*

Phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology rooted in and guided by observation and analysis. Flowers, Larkin, and Smith (2009) describe the method as "the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences" (p. 1) Instead of simply asking students about their particular academic habits, I want to understand the process by which students make their decisions. Why do students make the ethical choices that they do? What sorts of things do they consider in order to make such decisions? The answers to these questions can only be found through the lens of personal perspective and experience—the very things phenomenology will help me to better understand.

Such a method is ideal for unveiling ethical pressures as experienced by students and the processes by which they make decisions in matters of academic integrity.

### *Sample and Sampling Method*

My sample began with “friends of friends” and grew through the process of snowball sampling. I wanted to find students who were willing to sit down for an interview but who did not know too much about me or my experience on the Baylor honor council. I assumed that most Baylor students did not know the honor code well and that any sort of past conversation with me would likely make up the majority of the conversations a student had ever had about academic integrity. In other words, I wanted to make sure that the interviews were not simply composed of students feeding my own personal opinions back to me.

Snowball sampling is the process of using interviewees to connect with more students to interview. At the end of each of my interviews, I asked students if they knew of any peers who would also be willing to sit down with me. If they provided me with contact information for their friend, I would send them the email found in Appendix C. While such a method will clearly not guarantee a representative sample, it allowed me to dive deeply into the Baylor population that interests me most: science students.

The reason for my interest in science students is twofold. First, as a student of biochemistry myself, I have seen and felt the pressures to perform well academically that can so clearly tempt students to justify taking unfair shortcuts in order to maintain their GPA. Many Baylor science students have dreams of attending medical school, but such a pursuit (at least so we students are told by

advisors) requires near academic perfection. A student in another discipline may feel pressured to succeed by parental, personal, or professional motivations, but pre-medical students seem to sit under particularly weighty expectations. To many of my own peers, it is difficult for them to imagine how they would use their science degree if professional school does not work out. Such high stakes, as Lang explained, are the perfect breeding ground for dishonesty (2013, p. 104).

Second, it seems to me that, at Baylor, science students have ample opportunity for cheating due to the large class size of typical introductory science classes (often more than ten times the average class size of the university) and frequent reliance on online homework platforms for a portion of students' grades. Michael Fernbacher (2019) wrote that larger classes likely contributed to cheating because of how they can "make students feel anonymous" and "less connected to the material or the professor" (p. 5), and surely such feelings of anonymity are amplified when students complete homework online away from their class entirely. In my own experience, I had nearly three hundred classmates in my first biology class, and I have had graded online homework in biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics (all of which surely had the answers for free or for purchase on the internet). These large, potentially impersonal classes and these unmonitored homework assignments with answers a simple Google search away place science students at Baylor in a particularly tempting environment.

Of the eleven students, ten were female and one was male, and, except for a student studying accounting, all of the participants were students in the sciences. The lack of gender diversity should not be a problem because according to



McCabe et. al. (2012), as discussed in chapter two, “within similar majors, gender differences in cheating are typically very small” (p. 74) and “the traditional belief that men self-report more cheating than women is no longer a supportable conclusion” (p. 76). In total there were four biology majors (including one who was studying biology and history and another who was studying biology, Greek, and medical humanities), two neuroscience majors, and one major each in health science studies, engineering, speech pathology, accounting, and biochemistry. My sample included one freshman, two sophomores, four juniors, and four seniors.

### *The Interviews*

When I found a student to interview, we would arrange to meet in a quiet yet public and comfortable environment. Some interviews were conducted in apartment lobbies, some in the Baylor Sciences Building, and others in scattered buildings around campus. When I sat down with students, I explained to them the process of obtaining research approval through the Institutional Review Board and the basic premise of my study. Then, I walked them through my consent form (which can be found in Appendix D), explaining that I was going to record the interview but keep their data private on a password-protected computer. I also emphasized that they could stop the interview whenever they wanted, and, if I were to use any of their words, I would use a pseudonym to disguise their identity. After the students had read and agreed to the consent form, I started the recording device, reiterated a summary of the consent form, and asked for a verbal consent. All eleven of my password-protected recordings begin with the interviewee verbally consenting to the interview process.

After the students consented, I asked them twelve questions about their experience with the honor code, their personal use of online resources, and their perception of their peers given their use of resources. A full list of the interview questions can be found in Appendix B. Smith et al. (2009) explains that, in phenomenology, “data collection is usually... in the form of semi-structured interviews where an interview schedule is used flexibly and the participant has an important stake in what is covered” (p. 4). Because the interviews were semi-structured, I would occasionally ask a follow-up question to a response that I found particularly interesting or particularly unclear. Each interview lasted about ten to twelve minutes. After the interview, students often had questions about what I had learned in my research up to that point, my own personal answers to the questions in the interview, and, most commonly, whether or not their particular study habits could be considered cheating, based on my experience on the honor council. Happy to talk about such an interesting subject, I often spoke with my interviewees for a few more minutes after the recording had been turned off.

### *Transcription, Coding, and Data Protection*

As soon as I could, I transcribed the interviews, typing each word the two of us spoke, pausing and playing the audio using a button on my headphones. Later, to save the time of pausing and playing, I modified the recordings so I could listen to them at half (and eventually three-tenths) speed—a rate I could keep up with while typing without having to stop and start the recording. Following the instructions for phenomenological data analysis by John Creswell, I

proceeded “through the methodology of reduction, the analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for all possible meaning” (1998, p. 52). In other words, I codified the responses of students in order to search for trends in motivation and reasoning and to better understand their personal experience with academic integrity issues.

With all the responses for each of the questions, I organized the data in a spreadsheet. The first tab contained every question and response from each interview—a sort of master list. Each subsequent tab after the first corresponded with one of the interview questions. The interviewee responses were pasted in the far-left column, and I used the columns to the right for my coding categories. “A code,” Saldaña explains, “is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (2013, p. 3). For example, the first question asked about students’ familiarity with the honor code and the source of their information about it. Five of the eleven students, in one way or another, mentioned that they were in fact unfamiliar with much of what the honor code says. To categorize this, I pasted the respective quote from their interview in a column with the coding phrase “Not Familiar” in the row corresponding to the interviewee. I did the same for several other coding categories such as “Syllabus,” “Canvas Course,” “Professors,” and “Friends” to name a few more. I used this coding technique to categorize the responses to all twelve of the interview questions.

In addition to my columns for coding categories, I also had a column just for important observations. Often, students expressed interesting opinions on academic integrity in ways that did not quite answer the questions asked. Instead of making a coding category for responses that were unrelated to the question, I simply collected such interesting quotes in the column of observations. For example, many students contrasted “learning” and “cheating” in answers to a variety of questions, and I used this catch-all column to highlight these instances.

I kept all of the data on password-protected, electronic devices. The audio recordings were only kept on my personal iPhone and my personal computer—both of which can only be accessed by me. The transcripts were handled with the same care. I both typed the transcripts and coded them on my laptop. To protect the identity of my interviewees further, I have no record of any of their names. Instead, their transcripts and the responses I have recorded on my coding spreadsheet are labelled “Interview 1,” for example, with only their classification and major listed with each interview. I will alter any reference to friends, professors, or revealingly unique experiences, and I will use pseudonyms when referring to any interviewee in particular.

### *Limitations*

The nature of this study as phenomenology and the educational diversity of the interviewed students (or lack thereof) clearly limits the types of claims such a study can make. For one, all of the students that I interviewed were current students at Baylor University with varying degrees of college experience. I have no evidence to claim that Baylor students will think and behave like students at

other universities with different cultures and academic integrity policies. Only one participant of the eleven in the sample was a male, and he happened to be the only freshman student as well. While age and experience may significantly affect a student's perception of their peers and of academic integrity, I agree with McCabe et. al. that gender differences in cheating rates likely have much more to do with the cultures within the fields the sexes preferentially select (McCabe, 2012, p. 74). Therefore, both males and females will likely experience similar cultural pressures concerning integrity, and the findings of this study would likely be highly similar if there were more males in the sample.

As the snowball sampling would have it, all but one of my interviewees was studying a field of science. Through this study, I sought to gain some insight into current Baylor students' perceptions of their peers in light of their use of online resources, and the group of students interviewed fits such a scope nicely. However, any trends I find in the interview responses of my questions may not necessarily be reflective of the Baylor campus at large and therefore must not be generalized. The opinions of these eleven students only reflect the opinions of these eleven students, but they could very well lead to future hypotheses that should be tested with large-scale quantitative studies. Another reason that the students' responses cannot be generalized across Baylor's campus (or any other college campus) is because of the non-random sample by student majors. Snowball sampling helped immensely in finding willing participants with experience in high-pressure disciplines that often use unmonitored online homework, but it did leave me with students largely in the same field of study. It

is possible, for example, that students studying English feel entirely different about the current state of academic integrity on campus, but such voices were not included in the snowball sample. While students of all college ages participated in this project, because each does not represent their class in its entirety, I must also refrain from comparing my students by age, examining differences between differently aged students and claiming to have significant evidence of change over time. I will only provide observations that could be the basis of future studies with larger sample sizes.

Finally, a large portion of my interest in this project comes from the changes Baylor made to the honor code in the summer of 2018. However, with no data from before the changes, any longitudinal claim I make must be heavily qualified by the fact that a student can only speak to what they believe to be true and to what they remember about their past beliefs and perceptions. In general, I only asked interviewees questions about their current views of the honor code and of their peers, and few made any reference to the honor code changes or their study habits that preceded them.

Phenomenology as a method of study comes with its own limitations as well. A student's ability to remember and examine their own motivations, their ability to communicate such motivations in an interview, the amount to which they are honest about what they know, and my own personal ability to accurately interpret their subjective experience all stand as irremovable filters through which I must look to examine the personal experiences of Baylor students. In other words, "[Interpretative phenomenological analysis] also recognizes that access to

experience is always dependent on what participants tell us about that experience, and that the researcher then needs to interpret that account from the participant in order to understand their experience” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 3). To keep from making too strong of claims given the essential limits of phenomenology, I will support the analysis of my interview data using the direct quotes from interviewees that led me to my conclusions.

### *Verifiability*

As a commitment to quality, I will follow Lucy Yardley’s (2000) four guiding principles for assessing or, in my case, establishing validity within qualitative analysis. The first principle is a sensitivity to context, and to demonstrate such an approach, I leave much of my data in large, block quotes in order to allow “the reader to check the interpretations being made” (Smith et. al., 2009, pp. 180-181). The next principle Yardley advises qualitative researchers to abide by is one of commitment and rigor (2000). I attempt to meet this standard by the quality of my interviews through the comfort of my interviewees (see my email to participants in Appendix C) and my commitment, especially in light of the semi-structured style, to ask follow-up questions whenever a student’s answer was ambiguous. Yardley’s third principle for high-quality qualitative studies is transparency and coherence. She writes that this goal can be accomplish by, among other things, “detailing every aspect of the data collection process and the rules used to code data...” (Yardley, 2000, p. 222), and I have attempted to accomplish such in this very method chapter. Finally, Yardley insists that studies must be important and impactful. “A test of [a study’s] validity,” adds Smith et.

al. (2009), “lies in whether it tells the reader something interesting, important, or useful” (p. 183). I would suggest that, for those who care about Baylor and want to see it flourish the age of highly accessible internet, few things should be more important than preserving the security of its assignments and promoting the integrity of its students.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

This chapter contains the results from the 11 interviews with Baylor students, guided by direct quotes from the interview transcripts and organized based on the most significant coding categories that commonly resurfaced in the coding process. We will begin by discussing what I gathered from students in terms of the health of academic integrity at Baylor. We will hear what students' views on their online resources of choice, their friends', and how well the honor code pervades into the common social culture of Baylor—at least according to the interviewed students. Next, I will look at two very important findings from the interviews: why students cheat, and what keeps them from cheating. In these sections I will discuss the cheating/learning dichotomy some students use to make ethical decisions and other ways they can effortlessly justify dishonesty. For a hopeful end, I will examine students who decided not to cheat and the environments that helped them stand with strength in the face of temptation.

#### *Academic Integrity at Baylor*

##### *Quizlet*

The first clear trend to present itself in the interviews was the pervasive use of the online resource called Quizlet. Quizlet is an online platform where users can design and study flashcards. In addition to creating their own, students can share and search for flashcard sets that have been prepared by other students.

In response to the question that asks students to describe their personal use of online resources, all eleven of the interviewees said that they used Quizlet in some way. The majority of students described making their own personal Quizlet flashcard sets from their notes as a resource to study course material. For example, Claudia described her use like this:

Quizlet definitely. I like... So, for example for genetics, I write down all my learning objectives in my notebook, ...definitions, words, or even some of the specific questions from the book that I've answered, I'll type them up on Quizlet and I'll use them as a study tool.

Many other students as well referred to Quizlet as a “study tool” or a “good resource,” and a few students said Quizlet was “faster” and “cheaper” than handwriting traditional flash cards on notecards. Other students, like Rachel a senior studying speech pathology, noted how she used Quizlet to study what seemed most important. In her interview she said,

[I] Definitely use Quizlet. Um... like if I'm reading a chapter on oral rehabilitation, I'll go through and I'll write the bold terms, and I'll write the definitions of those, like, from the book basically. Yeah, that's mainly how I use Quizlet.

More than half of the interviewees also admitted to using other students' Quizlets that they found through the internet. Rachel, for example, continued to explain her take on the flashcard site saying,

I've found Quizlet very helpful. Mostly, like, online quizzes with standardized questions, or, like, online learning platforms; usually their questions are on Quizlet somewhere. Um, sometimes it has a straight answer, and sometimes, like, the online platform changes up the numbers, so I'm actually able to learn from these online resources.

Rachel here hits on an idea that many other students will echo. The answers to online homework can be found online, and if used correctly, students believe that using these answers is enhancing their learning experience.

Although every student that I interviewed admitted to using Quizlet in some way, not all of them did so without reservation. Kelly, a senior neuroscience major, for example said, “So I... In the past I found Quizlet really helpful, so when that stuff came out about the honor code, it was kind of like, ‘oh no! Like, what can I do?’” Despite knowing about recent honor code updates, Kelly is not able to say confidently whether the use of Quizlet is permitted. In fact, later in the interview, she called the use of Quizlet “up for debate.” Brandon, a freshman engineering major, was a little more confident calling the use of Quizlet “not allowed” and something that could be “reported” despite his own personal use of Quizlet to find the answers to his homework online. Beth, a junior in the biology department, said that although she wasn’t sure whether or not Quizlet was permitted or not, she believes the honor code is “too strict” if it does not allow the use of Quizlet. Marcie, a senior studying medical humanities said the following when she mentioned some rumors she had heard about the use of Quizlet:

I guess they changed the rule so that now, if you use someone else’s Quizlet, I think that’s considered cheating. That one needs to be explained to me. (laughs) If you’re using like a Quizlet, obviously, during a test that’s cheating.

Marcie does not seem to think that Quizlet is permitted by the Baylor honor code despite her conviction that there are fair and honest uses of the resource.

### *An Ineffective Code*

In response to my question about whether or not Baylor benefits from having an honor code, the most common response was “yes!” Students gave several reasons for this. Many believe that the honor code protects Baylor’s academics by limiting a student’s ability to receive a degree without really earning it. Furthermore, it supports Baylor’s Christian commitment by standardizing a set of required academic virtues. Still others said that the honor code protects the honest students who work hard from performing worse than those who take short cuts. Some students believed the honor code was at least a good attempt on Baylor’s part, and still others believed the code does not make much of a difference.

The second most common response to my question about whether or not Baylor benefits from its honor code was that it is ineffective at preventing cheating and unenforced. Brandon, for example, told me,

I think people are going to cheat anyways, so, like, does it really do anything? I don’t know. I mean, I would say probably not a whole lot. I think that the people that would cheat are going to do it anyway, and the people that won’t, aren’t.

From the activities of his peers, and even the cheating that he himself has been able to get away with, Brandon feels that the honor code does not make too much of a difference. Unfortunately, Brandon represents a more hopeless perspective, one that does not think there is much to be done about cheating. Responding to the same question, Rachel told me this:

I think people don’t believe that Baylor takes that much action on it. A lot of teachers say, like, they’ll threaten, like, “we’ll have to report you if we

see you cheating.” But it’s almost as if students are thinking, “are they really gonna do that?” Ya know?

Because of her experience watching peers cheat with no consequences, it seems that Rachel has lost faith, at least in part, in the school’s ability to prevent cheating.

Joslyn, a junior biochemistry major, echoed the same questions about the enforcement of the honor code. She told me that the honor code was a “good idea,” but she was unsure just how effective it was because of all the “opportunity to get away with things.” “I think you can say you want to have these standards,” she told me, “but unless you’re strict in upholding them, it doesn’t really mean anything.” Dana, a junior and a neuroscience major, expressed a similar idea, saying she was not quite sure how effective Baylor’s system of academic integrity is at actually limiting students’ ability to cheat and catching violators when they do.

Finally, despite the honor code, students had seemed to have many questions about which of their study habits are actually permissible strategies. In addition, when students expressed their view on what Baylor allows or does not, they often did not match the views of the next student I interviewed. There is clearly a lack of clarity on much of what students are and are not allowed to do in their classes. Specifically, there were many questions and inconsistent views about Quizlet. When I asked Beth about her current opinion of the Baylor honor code, she told me this:

[Baylor needs to] explain... especially the Quizlet rule, cause I’ve heard a lot of things about it, and like... personally I view Quizlet as a study tool, but if that’s not allowed, I would like to know just in case.

To Beth and many others, a total ban on Quizlet would feel unreasonable because of all the benefits of having virtual flashcards, but because of their desire to graduate Baylor with dignity and to honor its rules, they simply wanted clarity on what was allowed and what was not. A few students were convinced entirely that they were not allowed to use Quizlet under any circumstances, but none believed without doubt that Quizlet was an approved resource at Baylor nor did any mention that the clause in the honor code (III.C.16) that they believed to place their use of Quizlet into jeopardy allowed for the use of any resource with “written permission of the professor” (Baylor University, 2018). Even though the honor code allows for the use of these students’ choice online resources under certain conditions, none of them seemed to know about it.

### *Not Much Talk*

Another common theme in these interviews with students was the nearly ubiquitous unfamiliarity with the honor code. When I asked how familiar students were with the Baylor honor code, the most common response was something along the lines of “not at all.” When students admitted to having received information about the honor code, they mostly said that their professors’ syllabi were their greatest source. Others mentioned remembering some sort of “academic integrity course on Canvas” that they could not remember many details from, but most kept repeating the phrase “I really don’t know much.”

Wanting to assess these eleven students’ perspectives on whether academic integrity persists into the Baylor culture, I asked what they had heard their friends

say about the honor code. “Nothing. No one really talks about it. Not that I know of,” said Rachel. In the same vein, Claudia said, “I don’t think I’ve ever actually talked to any of my friends about the honor code.” There were a total of seven students out of the eleven who expressed the same: it seems that students may not hear very much about the honor code, and if they do it is likely not from their friends.

### *Why We Cheat*

#### *Cheating vs. Learning*

Concerning their use of online resources, many students seemed to believe in the mutual exclusivity of cheating and learning—a student could not possibly be doing both at once. In a way, the end justifies the means. If a student acts dishonestly in the process of genuinely seeking understanding, then the particular behavior should be allowed. Put a little more plainly, to many, if a student copies and pastes the questions of their internet homework into Google, finds all of the correct answers, and submits them for class credit, such behavior is perfectly acceptable *if they learned the course material in the process*. If the student copied the answers with no intention of learning, they are dishonest and using an unfair advantage. If a student learned the appropriate material because of their inappropriate access to the homework answers, then they have merely made good use of their resources.

Joslyn perfectly illustrated the cheating-learning dichotomy. She said the following in response to a question about whether she believes her friends are cheating based on their use of online resources.

I think it's cheating if you just go on there and find the direct answer and you use it. I was always... I always made sure I didn't do that. Like, I would go through and, like, check my work. I would use it as a reference. I wouldn't use it just to get the answers, so... I think if you use it just to get the answer and you don't actually learn anything by it, that's cheating. But if you use it as a reference to, like, check your work, I think I'm okay with that.

The act of checking your answers against an answer key pre-submission is a clear violation of one of the most basic and least disputed passages in the Baylor honor code, III.C.1, which specifically defines submitting another person's work as one's own as an act of academic dishonesty (Baylor University, 2018). However, Joslyn justifies her actions to herself with a simple semantic twist. It is not using a resource to cheat. It is using a resource "as a reference." Because she uses the resource to guide her through the course content ("to learn") and only secondarily to guarantee that her answers are correct, she considers it an appropriate use. To illustrate her point further, she said the following in response to a question about what she considers in order to determine if her particular use of online resources is permissible or not:

I think if you use it as a reference you're fine, but if you go on there and, like, copy paste your question from your Sapling homework into the Google search, pops up a Chegg page, you click on it, says the answer is point zero two five, and you put that in there... I think that's cheating. But if you, you know, type it in there, find a problem and you, like, follow someone's work and you go, "oh," like, "I blew a negative sign there. That's what I did wrong." Or, "Oh I," you know, "got the wrong formula for this and didn't use the inverse of it correctly" or something like that. Like, if you use it as a reference, I think it's fine. But, if you use it to



specifically get the answer and you don't learn anything from it, I don't think that's okay.

Notice how Joslyn describes near identical behavior twice in a row. In both her descriptions of an inappropriate and appropriate use of online resources, a student searches the internet for the answers to their online homework. Specifically, they use Google and Chegg—what I believe to be a common combination at Baylor. Chegg is an online subscription that grants students access to textbook solutions (i.e. the answers to their homework questions), video explanation, “math solver” programs, and help from tutors. The difference between the honest and dishonest use of these resources, according to students like Joslyn, is whether the course content was learned in the process. Searching for answers is smart if you learn in the process but wrong if you do not.

In Kelly's interview, she nearly described the same idea as the others, explaining how there is a difference between looking for answers and looking for understanding:

But I think if you do the work and you're actually looking for... understanding how to do the problem, I don't know if that is cheating... if you're looking for a step-by-step “this is how you do it...” I think if you're looking for the answer, that is [cheating].

Kelly made no reference to two different behaviors, but two different motivations for the same behavior. To the majority of the students that I interviewed, searching the internet for answers to your online homework is wrong unless you do so with the personal goal of learning instead of “finding answers.” Even when students believed that finding the answers to their homework was beyond justification, they expressed the same decision-making paradigm: cheating is

when a student improves their academic status without learning. Take Beth's thoughts, for example:

But if they're Googling "biology chapter 1 Campbell" and then just quizzing themselves on it, I think that's kind of okay because they had that resource to begin with. It's saving them time, in my opinion... On the other hand, using Chegg, things that you pay for, to get the answers to submit for a grade, I think that is considered cheating, cause you are paying for your grade at that point and you're not learning the material.

Beth believes that using Chegg to answer your homework questions is dishonest for two different reasons. First, it is a resource up for purchase and therefore not equally accessible to all students. Second, she says that when you are looking up answers on Chegg, you are no longer "learning the material." And if you are not learning but making the grade, you must be cheating. As soon as Beth finds a resource to which all students with the internet have equal access and is convinced that the resource aids her learning, it will likely be much more difficult for her to resist using it.

Rachel, quite nobly, claims that it would be better to receive a bad grade than to earn a good grade dishonestly. Even though she personally interprets looking up homework answers to be cheating (at least, some of the time. Her use of Quizlet—especially other people's Quizlets may very well be cheating), she still thinks about cheating as something that is mutually exclusive with learning: "And you don't learn when you cheat. Like what's that gonna help? Like a grade's a grade, but at the end of the day, like, what did you learn?" If a student is cheating, to Rachel, they are not learning. Those two things cannot happen at the same time. Beth echoed the same idea again, responding to a question about the

things she considered when determining whether or not she should go through with cheating. Here was her reason for choosing an honest path:

I think it made me feel uncomfortable because... We come to Baylor to learn. Ultimately that's what we're here for. We're not here for grades. We're not here for GPA. We're not here for a letter of recommendation. We're here to learn the material and grow our abilities to problem solve and critically think, so by short-changing that and cheating to just skip that whole process of learning on your own and struggling with it and trying to figure it out for yourself didn't feel right. Cause that undermines that whole reason why we're here, undermines college in general. It doesn't... you can't do one and still tell yourself that you're here to learn if you're not actually taking the steps to learn in my opinion.

Clearly, Beth's perspective leads her to choose what she believes to be the honest path, but she, just like most of the other interviewees, sees cheating as the opposite of learning. As soon as Beth believes an action that technically violates the honor code does not undermine the "whole reason why we're here," it could possibly be much more difficult to make the honest choice.

Dana also expressed the tension between cheating and learning and how, when online resources are more useful to understanding course content, it feels less like a dishonest thing to do:

Okay, so I think that online homework is kind of difficult to actually learn from like super well. So I, like, somehow justify like getting answers to online homework sometimes, but I don't think it's useful. Like I don't think that what I'm being tested over on my online homework or whatever is representative of what the professor's actually going to be testing me on. I think it's just a waste of my time trying to do these super difficult problems when that's not what's expected of me to do well in the class. So like in that sense, I think Chegg and online resources are more okay...But mastering physics, with problems that take 55 minutes for one single problem and it's nothing like the test is, I think online resources can be more justified and used.

Dana's use of online resources does not prevent her from learning because, in her mind, the online homework was a waste of time to begin with—an activity that

was not promoting her learning. In order to actually learn in the process (or at least save her time), Dana uses Chegg to find the answers to her online assignments. These resources are not cheating or dishonest or creating an unfair advantage, they are “useful.” The simple semantic switch makes justifying submitting answers that are not your own for homework so much easier.

Brandon alluded to the mutual exclusivity of cheating and learning and admitted, after describing his own personal use of online resources, that his own study habits were probably not above reproach. In an awesome moment of transparency, he told me,

Um... So I guess, like, on... on homework and stuff. I guess I technically would be cheating, cause, like, I do, like, look up answers. But, um... it's basically because I don't learn the material in class. And, um, I want something to, like, supplement my teaching in class. So I look up, like, basically the answer online to, like, figure out how to do it. And then based off of that, then I, like, kind of teach myself how to do it.

Here Brandon describes a behavior that I believe to be highly prevalent amongst Baylor science students: using the internet to find quick answers to online, unsupervised homework. Although he does not claim to believe his actions are blameless, he offers excuses based on learning. He did not yet learn the material in class, and his online resource helps him “figure out how to do it.” The end justifies the means. His reasoning for why his study habits sometimes constitute cheating matched nearly all the other interviews: if you complete your homework without learning anything in the process, you were probably cheating:

And then also if you're just, like, filling out a...uh, like a worksheet or whatever and you're just copying down off of something online, I feel like that's cheating, too. Cause like, you're not learning anything from that. So, like, anything that doesn't, like, show you're learning, or that you are, like, being taught something, I would say is cheating.

Cheating and learning do not happen at the same time. This is a great philosophy when the lack of learning leads students to believe that certain behaviors are cheating. However, the philosophy backfires when students believe that their dishonest actions are justified because they are learning the material in the process.

### *Real Cheating*

To many of the students that I interviewed, “cheating” and “violating the honor code” are synonyms. No students could possibly do one without the honor code. To others, however, the two terms are similar but not always the same. For example, in response to a question about whether she considers her friends use of online resources to be cheating, Kelly said, “I think it depends on your definition of cheating, but I think it’s definitely not academic integrity.” According to her, a person can violate the standards of academic integrity without also violating some definitions of cheating. Cheating to Kelly is not some transcendent, universally understood term.

With a bolder opinion, Brandon told me that the apparent disconnect between cheating and honor code violations has led him to believe that his peers do not seriously care about what the honor code has to say. At the very least, it is not some document with authority on what is cheating and what is fair. Here is how he responded to a question on how his peers would feel if they heard he had violated the honor code:

My friends would be fine with it. Like... I don’t really feel like there’s much, like, respect for the honor code, honestly. And like... so yeah, I

don't think anyone would really care... and, like, I don't feel like people who violate [the honor code] are, like, easily caught. Like, I don't know anybody who's been, like, caught. And so, like, it's easy to get away with, and a lot of people do it. So... yeah. That's why I don't think there's much respect for it.

If Brandon's friends would not care if he violated the honor code, then clearly the honor code is not an authoritative list on how to live rightly and fairly. Instead, it is just a list of some arbitrary rules that is inconsistently enforced (if enforced at all) and conspicuously disconnected from the tactics of today's students.

Joslyn expressed a similar idea concerning the difference between things that are called cheating (academic integrity violations) and things that are actually wrong (cheating). She said the following when I asked her how her friends would feel if they heard that she had violated the honor code:

Like, they would probably disagree and say, "it should be fair to use Chegg," or, like, "She didn't plagiarize on that paper. She just, like, cited her sources incorrectly." Or something like that. If it was something big, like I was taking an exam and I just pulled my notes out in the middle of the exam, like they would be like, "okay that's wrong." But for most of the academic integrity violations, they would probably be like, "that was a bogus call."

Because of her disagreement with what she believes to be Baylor's stance on internet resources (something no interviewee could tell me with any degree of confidence), Joslyn does not believe that all behaviors that technically violate the honor code are immoral. In fact, she even thinks her friends would defend the use of Chegg on moral grounds, arguing that using the online test bank is "fair" despite its subscription cost. Joslyn's friends, and presumably Joslyn as well, also believe that unintentionally citing sources incorrectly does not constitute fair grounds for a violation. If Joslyn justifies Chegg with the cheating vs. learning

paradigm, it seems that much of her assessment of the fairness of an action depends on intentions. If you intend to learn or intend to give credit to an author you are quoting, then no violation can be committed. Academic integrity violations should not be things students can commit by accident. To explain the levity of these two potential violations, she compared them to a far more egregious offense: cheating on a test. While using unapproved resources to answer homework questions should be okay, using unapproved resources on an official examination is “wrong.” Despite being equally unallowed, clearly Joslyn considers cheating on a test to be far worse, and many other students expressed the same sentiment.

Jordan is a senior accounting major who seemed to think, like Joslyn, that test cheating is real cheating. Answering the same question on how she thought her friends would respond if she received an honor code violation, she said,

I think it depends in what way. If it was on a test or something in my major, I think that their view of me would be definitely skewed, and they would not wanna work with me. But if it was something trivial, I think they would admit that they’ve done it also.

Here Jordan describes two very different responses her friends might have. If she was found to have cheated on “something trivial” (i.e. non-test assignments or non-accounting assignments), she believes her friends would shrug it off and admit to having done the same. But, if Jordan were to receive a violation for cheating on a test (especially a test within her major), she would expect distancing from her friends and a reputational mar. Test cheating is real, serious, and major, but cheating on other assignments are not that big of a deal. Sara, a junior

studying neuroscience, felt the same way about her friends' responses when she said,

So, if it was like... again, like, something small like homework, I don't think they would care. But we're all pretty competitive with each other, so if they felt that I had actually cheated on something really major, like a final or any one of the tests, I think they would have a problem with it.

Test cheating is real, major cheating, but cheating on other assignments is trivia and no big deal to peers. Dana told me that her friends would laugh if she were accused of violating the honor code and say, "yeah me too!" She later clarified that her friends would react much more seriously if she had committed a serious violation—like cheating on a test—but not if she had simply found the answers to her homework online.

Beth revealed what she believed her friends thought about cheating when she said, "For my friends that encouraged me to use Chegg, they don't see themselves as violating the honor code." If Beth is correct, then there are at least a handful (I would venture to guess that there are truthfully many, many more) at Baylor who do not believe that using online resources to ace electronic homework is cheating. They are not just weighing pros and cons. They are also not willfully and consciously doing something that they know intellectually to be a violation of ethics. They genuinely believe that their use of online resources is good and fair, presumably because the resource is available to everyone (so there is no "unfair" advantage) and they believe that the resource helps them learn the material. Homework cheating is not "real cheating." "Real cheating," in the minds of many of these interviewees, is evil, intentional, and malicious; "real cheating" happens



when students accomplish success in the classroom without learning or truly engaging with the course material.

### *Ease of Cheating*

Towards the end of the interviews, I asked students what they believed to be the greatest source of temptation to cheat. I received about seven different answers. The first six were the pressure of graduate school, the presence of online resources, watching peers cheat “successfully,” saving time on assignments, the opportunity to improve a “nearly-good grade,” and the drive of perfection. The most common answer by far that students gave for the greatest temptation to cheat at Baylor was that cheating was just so easy.

Taylor is a sophomore studying biology, and she told me that the rampant opportunity to cheat made resisting the temptation the hardest. In response to my question about the greatest source, she told me simply, “someone next to you.” Quick, simple, mindless glances to the tests of the students sitting nearby—cheating is sometimes just too easy and simple. Not only is the act itself easy, but it is also far easier by comparison than the alternative of studying hard and completing assignments with integrity. Brandon explained it like this:

Hm... I would say it's when you don't know the material, and you don't want to take the time to learn it—to, like, really learn it. And then... it's just easy. It's easy to cheat. So that's probably the greatest source. Just, like, an easy way out.

Cheating is easy in two ways. It is easy to accomplish, and it is the easy way out. In other words, there is little resistance in the choice itself to take the path of least resistance.

Jordan described the ease and availability of cheating as well. If inappropriate resources are so available, why not use them to help you earn the grade you need?

So for classes that everyone has to take... multiple-choice, standardized tests. Usually there's a key somewhere. Or a student has it. Or... ya know...it's been passed down or something. Um... I think that is the greatest temptation, because you have the answers. Why wouldn't you look at them and then get a hundred? Ya know?

Jordan says that standardized tests *usually* have answers available online. Not sometimes or just often, but in the normal case with these sorts of assignments, students can find all the answers they need if they just take the time to look. Cheating is so easy, to some students it may feel like the default choice. Taking classes honestly is not the expected behavior, but a supererogatory one (i.e. probably a good thing to do, but definitely not required). Rachel told me that cheating is so easy because of "how naïve sometimes professors can be towards their students." The simple "lack of skepticism," as she said it, from those in charge dramatically reduces the risk and difficulty of cheating. Marcie said that copying down answers from her friends was just so easy that it was just not worth the effort to overcome laziness in order to complete the assignment herself. Finally, Kelly shared with me the same perspective: cheating is tempting because it is just too easy.

I would also say in the moment in tests I've definitely...I've personally felt the temptation. I've seen other people do the same thing of like, "oh it would be so easy..." Like, I'm anxious in a test and I'm stressed, it would be so easy to look at the next person's paper....But I think that's an in-the-moment... like, you get panicked and people start thinking, like, oh that's an easy solution.

It seems, at least for the six students who responded that cheating was tempting because it was easy to do, that, at least for some students at Baylor, cheating does not take much effort at all. Often, if a student wants to cheat, or if they just feel pressured to do so, few barriers stand in their way.

### *An Online Friend*

Some students compared using online resources to help answer their online homework to working with a friend or attending a professor's office hours. And if using an online resource is just like going to a professor for help, then surely it is a permissible homework strategy. Brandon told me the following in response to a question about how he views his peers' use of online resources:

A lot of my professors tell you too that you can work on them with other students—like, help each other figure out the problem. So, to me, I don't really see as big of a cheating thing if they're telling you to, like, go and find people to help you with the problem anyway. It's not like...it's just like having another person there helping you. It's just online instead of in person. And they always... A lot of my professors think it's, like, really good if you go into their office hours and ask them for help on the homework. So what's the difference [between] talking to a professor and getting their help one-on-one and just using another online resource for something as minimal as homework?

Because Brandon believes he is allowed to get the answers he needs to his unsolved homework problems from his friends and his professors in their office hours, he believes receiving the same information from a website like Chegg or Yahoo Answers to be equally permissible. When I asked Kelly how she feels about using online resources to check her homework answers before submitting them, she said this:

Um... that's a good question. I definitely, like... that's something I've thought about in physics especially because I would have ones where I did

the work, and I kept getting it wrong, and so I'd go to a friend and say, "hey, how did you do this? Like, I need help." And I don't know how different that is than doing the work and then checking online if there's a solution. But I always just felt more o.k. in myself with, like, going to the professor, or, if she wasn't available, talking to a friend and getting an explanation. I think there's just more accountability in that.

Kelly does not prefer to go to the professor or a friend instead of checking an online resource because she believes the use of online resources to be wrong or against the rules. Instead, she feels "more o.k." when she consults with a live person because there is "more accountability." The problem is not with the resources themselves but in their particular use.

### *Why We Don't*

#### *Value of failure*

Although many students' definitions of cheating (i.e. earning a good grade without learning) permitted them to practice certain habits that were likely violations of the honor code, many felt passionately that cheating was wrong and that it robs one of the ability to learn through failure. Marcie, for example, said the following:

And if I didn't do the work, then I shouldn't get the credit. And if you get a really bad grade on something because you procrastinated or you forgot, it will teach you to do better the next time.... Unless we're calling using Chegg to study for a test cheating, I think that would be my example of being tempted. Because I've definitely used Chegg to study for a test, like I said earlier.

Marcie here, quite wisely, describes the value of failure. Cheating is wrong because it skips the learning process and gives you a grade you did not earn, sure, but here Marcie explains that it also robs students of the opportunity to fail and

learn from mistakes. Potential strength and personal growth are another casualty of academic dishonesty.

Rachel drew the same conclusion as Marcie. There is great personal gain in failure. Some lessons just cannot be taught through victory:

And, I wanna... like, one reason I love, like, I love school is because I want to learn. And in order to learn, you have to fail a little bit. And in order to fail, you have to make mistakes like that and not cheat.

Rachel believes that, not only can failure help a person learn, failure is essential to the process of learning. One cannot learn without failing. And if one cannot fail without taking their courses honestly and without cheating, then cheating halts learning through the elimination of failure. Perhaps it is no coincidence that both Marcie and Rachel are seniors. It seems that it would be much more difficult for underclassmen to come to the same mature appreciation for failure.

### *Role of Encouragement*

When asked about how they came to overcome the temptation of cheating, a couple students mentioned that open conversation with others about academic dishonesty and encouragement to act honestly in the face of difficulty and failure had been one of their most helpful aids. Beth, for example, told me about a conversation she had with her dad when she knew all of her friends were using Chegg to cheat and she was tempted to do the same.

I talked to my dad about it, and I was like, "I don't feel right." And he was like, "then don't do it. If you fail the class, you fail the class." He was like, "It's better to stick with your morals and fail a class than cheating to get by." And that... I just needed [to hear someone] say... "it's okay if you fail a class." Cause I don't personally like to fail. Just don't. And so I was like, "ok." So then, after that, I realized what I was doing wasn't working, but I didn't want to use Chegg. So I went to more office hours, did all the

problems in the back of the book. I did as much as I could, and my grade improved slightly. So... I was just... that made me feel better knowing that I could do something other than what I considered cheating to do better in the course.

Incredibly, it was through her father giving her permission to fail that Beth was inspired to avoid cheating and take all the honest action she could do improve her status in the class. Encouragement from a trusted mentor helped her “stick with her morals” and act with integrity even when using Chegg like her friends probably would have benefitted her grade the most. The words of a trusted mentor can be powerful!

Claudia, a sophomore Biology major, had similar conversation with her parents when she felt tempted to cheat in one of her classes. In her interview, she told me,

But I, like, I always had my parents telling me, like, “why would you wanna stoop to that level and, like, give into that temptation, and then feel bad about what you just did?” So I feel like that, like having my parents specifically tell me that is what, like, kept me from, like, ever, you know giving into that sort of temptation. Cause I feel like most people have had some sort of temptation to do something like that, but, you know, I think a lot of it is who you surround yourself with.

Claudia believes the temptation to cheat to be a given—something every student will experience. Because she was encouraged by her parents to choose the option that she would not regret and feel bad about later, she felt empowered to take her classes with integrity in spite of the potential for a lower grade.

Both Beth and Claudia were similarly convinced by their parents that their integrity and the personal satisfaction of resisting temptation were far more valuable than receiving the next highest letter grade.

## *Conclusion*

While there are many aspects of Baylor academic integrity to celebrate—students who respond to the encouragement to be honest from mentors, students who desire to be honest and to respect the boundaries set by the Baylor honor code, students who are clearly aware that the school has an honor code that it takes seriously, etc.—there are also some telling signs that Baylor has room for improvement. Many students expressed confusion or frustration with an honor code that did not seem to answer all of their questions about how they can use online resources. Even worse, some students felt that cheating was necessary for their learning or so rampant and easy that it was nothing out of the ordinary. Because of malleable procedures and structures at Baylor, students face overwhelming temptation and pressure to take classes in a way that they do not prefer—dishonestly. In the next chapter, we will look at these structures and what Baylor can do to lift this burden from students and free them to become students of confidence, courage, and integrity.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion

In the final chapter of this thesis, I will discuss the implications of the interview results: the problems they entail, and the steps Baylor can take to mitigate them. I will look at grade inflation (a result of unmonitored cheating that is dangerous in spite of its undetectability), how professors at Baylor incentivize dishonesty, the ubiquitous use of online resources that students cannot defend with any confidence, and how internet cheating just does not *feel* egregious enough to stop. Next, I will charge Baylor with some of the steps to improvement—it is in this final section that I will recommend to my school how to combat the cheating problem I have long been getting to know. Here I will recommend that Baylor use students in the amending of the honor code and also in the implementation of “cheating audits” that will defend both students and professors. Also, I will explain how Baylor can simply make cheating more difficult for students through some radical and unprecedented changes and why ethical priming before every examination should be required of all Baylor professors. Finally, I will discuss one of the most poignant reasons why Baylor students decide not to cheat—permission to fail. In this final section, I will insist that Baylor normalizes failure and emphasizes to students the great growth potential in coming up short.



## *The Problems*

### *Grade Inflation*

There is an interesting phenomenon that appears to result from the online homework that many professors (from the interviews, many physics professors) employ. Many students mentioned that their online homework is too difficult, time consuming, or irrelevant. Clearly these judgements are for the professor who designs and leads the class to make and not his or her pupils, but the response students make to their frustration likely hinders a professor from appropriately evaluating their own class. If it were true that the homework that a professor assigns is far too difficult, time consuming, or frustrating, how would they come to know that before the semester had come to a close? Just like the high temperatures of Waco summers notify the thermostat to turn on the air conditioning, low grades on homework and other assessments as well as the increase in student concern and communication indicate to the professor that the tested material was out of reach for his or her students. The examination-grade feedback mechanism enables a professor to confidently consider whether they need to review certain content in greater depth, to curve test grades or drop assignments, to introduce more complicated challenges to students who are outperforming previous semesters, or to make any number of appropriate changes for the maximum benefit of the class. A healthy feedback loop is essential to a dynamic classroom in which a professor uses assignments to assess knowledge and skill and not just to assign a grade. The broken feedback loop leads to a sort of grade inflation where the class averages on assignments become so far above

students' actual abilities that completing homework unassisted by online answers becomes too expensive for students.

Many of the students that I interviewed—despite the nearly unanimous belief that cheating was a bad thing that hindered learning—described how they would use internet resources such as Google, Quizlet, and Chegg to find the answers to their homework. Most of them did so with the belief that their access to the correct answers actually enhanced their learning, or they believed that the homework was too difficult and unrelated to the lecture material for them to make the grade they felt that they needed. Regardless of their motivation, many students felt justified in looking up homework answers—a behavior that likely earns them a higher grade than they would have earned otherwise and in much less time.

With a reasonable or even high class average score on homework, a professor believes that the assignments appropriately assessed the students' knowledge, and because many students turned to online answer keys instead of struggling with a problem and seeking the professor's help via emails and office hours, the professor overestimates the confidence and comfort of the class. In effect, we have left a fan blowing on the thermostat throughout the Waco summer. With the constant supply of cool air, the thermostat sees little need to activate the air conditioning that the room desperately needs. In the same way, because the students are able to find the answers to their homework online, the professor never receives the feedback that would lead them to reduce the pressure (or even the ability) to find answers online in the first place. This means that the difficulty, length, and relevance of assignments never change, and students continue to feel

the same pressures to subvert their homework assignments as before. The feedback loop is no longer providing the professor with the signals that he or she assumes that it is.

This broken feedback loop not only affects professors—it has a major impact on the way students think about their classes and their behavior as well. If one's peers are using online resources, that student loses all confidence that their poor performance will be a significant enough signal to the professor to reevaluate the class assignments. If all students performed poorly on the homework, then the professor would clearly see that students were struggling and make the necessary changes, but if the only students who do poorly are the few that choose not to look up answers online, the professor could never know the real health of his or her class. If a student knows that the feedback loop is nonfunctional, he or she will feel more alone and unaided in their choice to take their assignments honestly. Should they still make the honest choice? Absolutely. But what if they had classes that helped them to do so instead of pressuring them to keep up with cheating peers?

### *Incentivizing Dishonesty*

With the ease and availability of cheating at Baylor, many honest students are forced to wrestle with the cost of their choice to complete their assignments without cheating. With difficult science homework, the difference in performances between students with and without online resources must be far from trivial. If a student chooses not to access the online answer keys that his or her friends are using, that student is deciding to take a path of long, frustrating

work with a lower grade all while watching friend ace the same assignment in a fraction of the time. Now perhaps in the long run such a student would come to see the great value of integrity and self-control in their life, but with so many peers going unpunished, the temptation to complete homework dishonestly will be far too great for many.

In the Spring of 2019, a friend of mine contacted me about a difficult science lab that she was struggling to keep up with. She told me that she spent long, difficult hours to achieve her B's on the class's online homework assignments that were worth thirty percent of her grade, but her peers would tell her about the A's they achieved in less than thirty minutes because of their use of online resources. My friend was particularly upset after her professor hinted that he was aware of the problem. One day in class, he mentioned that he was curious as to why the test grades were so low after such perfect homework grades, and then he jokingly coughed the word "Chegg!" into his sleeve. This professor knew, or at least had a strong suspicion, that students were using Chegg to find the answers to their online homework, but he failed to condemn it. This confused my friend: could she now pay the subscription fee to use this resource as well? Was thirty percent of her grade in this important lab that nearly every Baylor science student takes really up for purchase?

Hoping to help my friend and to combat a frustrating issue, I sent her professor the following email on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019:

Hello Dr. [Timmins],

This is Gage Hallbauer. I'm a junior University Scholar, and I took your [science] lab last Spring and thoroughly enjoyed it! Your enthusiasm and clear presentations made [science] enjoyable and much easier to understand.

I am also a member of the Baylor Honor Council, and because I've been on the council for 4 semesters now, I often have friends ask me questions about the Honor Code and how it might apply to particular classes. A friend of mine recently asked me about using Chegg in your class. She said that many students that she knows pay for Chegg and make A's on the Sapling homework, but she struggles to complete the homework on her own and makes B's. She said in a text to me, "I'm frustrated because I'm putting in many times more effort trying to do the assignment honestly, and as a result I'm doing worse."

As respectfully as I can, I just wanted to let you know about this! If you have not explicitly allowed the use of Chegg to answer Sapling questions like this, it seems that many students in your class are violating the Honor Code (section III.C.16). If you do allow students to use Chegg, it seems that some students are not aware of the fact and are therefore performing poorly on Sapling homework unnecessarily. In addition, students are able to purchase 30% of their [Science] Lab grade.

I just wanted to bring this to your attention in case you didn't already know. A possible solution to the unmonitored Chegg problem could be to make Sapling optional and to have short in-class quizzes that account for 30% of the grade instead. I am happy to get coffee with you anytime if you wanted to brainstorm ideas! I am writing my honors thesis on academic integrity in the age of the internet, so these are the types of conversations I love to have.

Thank you for considering this, and thanks for all you do to make Baylor great!

Gage Hallbauer

Honor Council Member (2017-present)

University Scholar '20

Dr. Timmins, whose name was really something else, never responded, and I never heard that his class policy ever changed, either.

I believe, and I found in my interviews, that this is a situation in which many Baylor students find themselves. Students are forced to choose between the short-term gain of dishonestly acquired high grades for less effort and the long-term gain of perseverance and integrity. While the correct choice is clearly the path of integrity, it should come as no shock that many ordinary, optimistic, and well-intentioned Baylor students choose the dishonest road and look up the answers to their homework. In a sense, these courses incentivize dishonesty—they encourage it and reward it. When students look up the answers to their homework, they enjoy greater success and experience much less of the pain of wrestling with confusing science concepts. There is nearly no chance of getting caught due to the unmonitored nature of online homework, and students can find other ways to prepare for their test that do not involve the sacrifice of their grade like honestly attempting their homework does. It took great personal strength for my friend to resist the temptation to use Chegg on her homework, and clearly many of her peers did not share such strength and instead grew in habits of indulgence, laziness, and dishonesty. I believe my friend became stronger, but her peers grew less capable of making the right choice in the face of difficulty in the future.

Baylor needs classes that incentivize learning and character growth—not dishonesty and shortcuts.

### *Everybody Uses Quizlet*

Through the interview process, I became more confident in my suspicion of the prolific use of Quizlet on campus. In fact, all eleven of the students that I interviewed admitted to using Quizlet in some form. Even though many expressed that they used Quizlet simply as cheap and fast alternative to flashcards, none could confidently say that their particular use of the resource was permissible according to the Baylor honor code. At best, they *hoped* it was allowed and felt confident that there was little question as to whether it was genuinely helpful to students. In my personal experience on the honor council, I have never seen III.C.16 of the honor code (Baylor University, 2018) interpreted to mean that Quizlet in all of its uses is strictly prohibited without professor permission—but the amendment was written so ambiguously that different professors in different courses and different members in different honor council hearings could potentially interpret it strictly and in a way that fails to defend students in the most innocent of internet searches. If the interpretation that completely bans the use of Quizlet without written permission from a professor is correct, then the honor code was amended in the Spring of 2018 with complete disregard to common student practice. Quizlet is not just used by a small band of cheaters but by honors students and science students and language students and a plethora of student of all kinds who believe cheating is self-punishing and contemptible. This would certainly lead to the disillusionment with the honor code McCabe et. al.

wrote about that so easily increases cheating on campus (2012, p. 180). If however, the “Quizlet ban” interpretation is not correct, then many students use Quizlet with uncertainty, fear, or guilt unnecessarily, or they are at least developing the habit of using study tactics despite a lack of confidence that they are acting with integrity. This is a habit Baylor should fight to prevent from growing in its students.

### *Internet Cheating Does Not Feel Bad*

Many of the students that I interviewed were able to give a host of explanations and justifications as to why their particular brand of looking up homework answers was permissible. Some said that it helped them learn, others said the homework was never helpful to begin with, still others mentioned the need to keep up with the grade inflation caused by their friends cheating too. Regardless of the reasoning, it became clear in these interviews that cheating on homework simply does not feel like cheating—and how it feels is what counts! Recall Ariely’s fudge factor; people (including Baylor students) will take every advantage they can until they no longer *feel* like an honest and good person (2012, p. 27). The students I interviewed often expressed anger or resentment for their peers who had looked off of a neighbor’s test during an exam. That is real cheating! Many of those same students, however, managed to spin their dishonest homework strategies in a way that sounded benign and just a “good use of resources.” Trusting students to take their online homework honestly without any supervision is a great risk. Students will rarely behave in ways that they cannot



justify, but their ability to justify dishonesty on online homework assignments is immense.

### *The Solutions*

#### *Involve Students*

##### *Amend III.C.16*

In order to combat cheating on online assignments, Baylor must amend III.C.16. In its current form, it is far too ambiguous and casts its nets far too wide depending on its interpretation. As of now, III.C.16 says, as an example of "dishonorable conduct" or "academic dishonesty": "Using, uploading, downloading, or purchasing any online resource that has been derived from material pertaining to a Baylor course without the written permission of the professor" (Baylor University, 2018). What does "derived from material pertaining to a Baylor course" mean? To some, and especially those who confidently expressed in an interview that Quizlet is "banned," "derived from" could just as well say "relevant to." If a student finds a webpage or watches a video to clear up a confusing topic from a lecture, they are using an online resource that is relevant to their course and that would not be allowed. If this is not the correct interpretation of the clause and students are free to use any resource *as long as it does not contain the questions and/or answers of an assignment*, then why are there students who are so unsure of whether their personal use of Quizlet as a private flashcard service is allowed? If a student is really not allowed to use online resources such as Quizlet without written

professor permission, why are professors not encouraged (or even required) to spell out their policy on using online resources in their syllabus? Personally, as a student at Baylor, I have yet to encounter a science professor who clarified whether particular websites were allowed for students to use as study aids.

To fix this problem, Baylor should do one of two things. The first is to require that all professors list in their syllabus the online resources that they do and do not allow students to use. This would clear up confusion and allow students to use the websites that are helpful to them with confidence that they are not violating the honor code. This is the easier path, but it is not the path that I recommend. Even if professors list that they do not want their students to use Quizlet for flashcards or to search for former students' Quizlet sets, there is still no oversight and those who are willing to break the rules benefit. In other words, this is still a system that incentivizes dishonesty. With little to no chance of getting caught, those who use resources they are not supposed to get ahead, and the others struggle to keep up. Also, a professor could not possibly keep his or her list current enough to disapprove or approve of every new study resource that comes out each year. Because of this, I recommend that Baylor goes with a second option and amends its honor code once again but that it does so with abundant student involvement.

One reason the changes to the honor code have seemed to confuse students and decreased respect for the honor code is because the updates appeared to blatantly contradict common student practice. To avoid this, Baylor must involve students in the amendment process. This inclusion of students will make Baylor's

honor code fall more in line with what McCabe et. al. found to be the most effective and classic use of an honor code (2012, p. 91). If Baylor used honest, hard-working students, they would avoid the mistake of inadvertently confusing the student population about the uses of common resources. Baylor students on an amendment committee should feel free to speak up when they feel like a modification to the honor code does anything other than clarify what cheating is, condemn it, and empower students who are not doing such activities.

*Investigate regularly*

Next, Baylor needs to investigate its student population regularly. Just in the eleven face-to-face interviews I conducted for this project, I found that at least some students at Baylor are seriously confused as to what constitutes an integrity violation and easily justify dishonesty. With routine, quantitative studies with surveys and large sample sizes, Baylor could stay up to date on common student practice and on the student body's perception of its peers and of the honor code. It is my belief that many students are frustrated by the cheating they see around them, and the opportunity to express to the school the loopholes their peers have found could be very beneficial. At the very least, the survey could ask students if they had ever committed any of the nine common cheating behaviors that McCabe et. al. ask about in their surveys while at Baylor (2012, p. 3). This survey would need to be conducted and tracked by the Office of Academic Integrity as a tool for measuring the success of its cheating prevention initiatives.

To benefit from the perspective of students in such investigations, these surveys should be written and administered by the students of the Baylor honor

council. To accommodate this additional work and other work I will suggest for the students of the honor council, it is quite possible that at least the students of the group will need to meet regularly outside of honor code violation hearing and that VI.A of the honor code would need to be amended in order for a larger number of students to be selected for the council. The survey that collects anonymous student responses about cheating would be an annual project of the council's, and they would discuss as a group the best ways to poll the student body and to incentivize students to take the survey. Ideally, the questions of this survey would remain the same each semester so that the results could be compared year to year. With the first year's results serving as a baseline, the honor council, or whatever group assigned to the project by the Office of Academic Integrity, would set achievable goals with deadlines. What kinds of cheating do Baylor students report the most? What steps could the university take in reducing cheating rates? How could the university communicate its integrity standards to the student body? What amount of self-reported cheating is the university comfortable with, and how soon can we get down to that level? These could be the guiding questions of this new investigative role of the honor council.

Finally, I recommend beginning random "cheating audits" of Baylor classes—especially Baylor science classes. In a cheating audit, members of the honor council (or whatever investigative group) would collect the syllabus and course procedures of a random class, observe a few quizzes and tests, and interview anonymous students in order to examine the class for potential weak spots. In a report at the end of the audit, the council would help the professor

consider how students might be cheating and brainstorm creative strategies on how to prevent or discourage such behavior. The council would submit their recommendations to the professor after their research, and the Office of Academic Integrity could follow up with the professor the next semester to ensure that the aspects of the professor's class that allowed for or even pressured students to cheat had been changed. These audits would be random, so professors might take the opportunity to consider more carefully how students might cheat in their own classes even in semesters where they did not receive a cheating audit. If a professor gives online homework and his or her students are purchasing the answers off the internet (as is the case in many Baylor science classes), that professor needs to know and needs ideas and encouragement to modify his or her class and reduce the grade inflation and cheating incentivization. The council should audit just a few classes each semester, starting with the large, introductory science courses where cheating is likely most prevalent.

### *Make Cheating Harder*

One of the most pervasive themes throughout the interviews that I conducted in this project was simply the ease with which Baylor students can cheat in their science classes. While the main goal of the university should be to mold students into more honest people, it should also seek to limit the temptations and opportunities to cheat in order to protect the hard work and the value in the diplomas of honest Baylor Bears. In my experience on the honor council, it is a refreshing thing when a student is caught in obvious dishonesty, grieves their mistake, and makes the decision to live a life of integrity. When the standards of

cheating are unclear, the ease of cheating is so great, and the prevalence of cheating is so widespread, students are robbed of the opportunity for transformative self-honesty. When students are caught cheating on standards that seem “gray”, they are less confronted with the reality of their need to grow in virtues such as self-control and integrity. “Gray cheating,” like looking up the answers to homework questions, does not *feel* like cheating, and some students argue you can commit it without even trying. It is my dream that cheating at Baylor be reduced to its most obvious forms (such as looking off of a neighbor in a test), and the opportunities for gray cheating be completely eliminated. That way, cheating can only be an intentional, deceptive act at Baylor (not an accident or a misunderstanding), and students caught in the act will see themselves more clearly and have a much more difficult time convincing themselves that they have no need of character growth.

There is a particular science class at Baylor that I believe handles academic integrity well. In this professor’s best semesters, she sets up cameras to watch students as they take their tests (some students that I interviewed even mentioned these cameras as another reason they do not cheat). No student sits next to another student with the same test version, and graphing calculators are not allowed because of their ability to have cheat sheets programmed and hidden within. All the tests she passes out are numbered so that she can ensure that all of her tests are returned. She tells me that if a test does not return, she considers it “compromised” and removes it from her test cycle that only repeats every few years. All of her questions are original, so no online resource could possibly hold

the answers to her tests. Even when students come in to review their errors, they must turn in their cell phone while they examine a test so that there is no chance that photos of the questions will leak out and compromise the exam. This same professor prevents online cheating effectively as well. She still gives students online homework questions, but they just are not graded. That way, if a student finds all the homework answers online, they can truly serve as a study aid and not a means to steal points in the class. The only assignments that receive grades are those done in the classroom where the professor can control the variables that lead students to cheat. With this system, she never has to worry about the particular methods students use to answer their homework questions.

This should become the model for the university. If professors give homework questions that are unoriginal and easily discoverable with a simple Google search, they must not take the homework for a grade. Such a system artificially inflates the grades of the dishonest and disincentivizes honesty. The lack of supervision is simply too great to require students not to use the internet and its uncountable number of helpful resources. When students work on ungraded online homework or homework with all original questions, the internet becomes powerful tool for learning and explanation. Students can find tutorials and lectures and articles from all around the world with no fear of accidentally stumbling on the all the verbatim answers to their questions. Their library extends from the four walls of Moody to any resource that is accessible by Google. This is a classroom design that enhances learning in the age of the internet, and it should

be imitated by all professors at Baylor who still give unmonitored online homework that has its answers just a subscription away on Chegg.

Convinced by the debacle of unsupervised and unoriginal online homework and the great temptation it creates for students to become more dishonest people, Baylor should require that professors who assign such assessments to their students cease from doing so immediately. This would be unprecedented and different from any other university in the country, but Baylor's convictions are just as rare. I believe tackling this problem is essential to Baylor protecting its academics and Christian commitments.

The problem with online and unsupervised is not that they cannot be used well by students and taken honestly. The problem is that the option to break the rules and take the assignment dishonestly is far more beneficial in the short run.

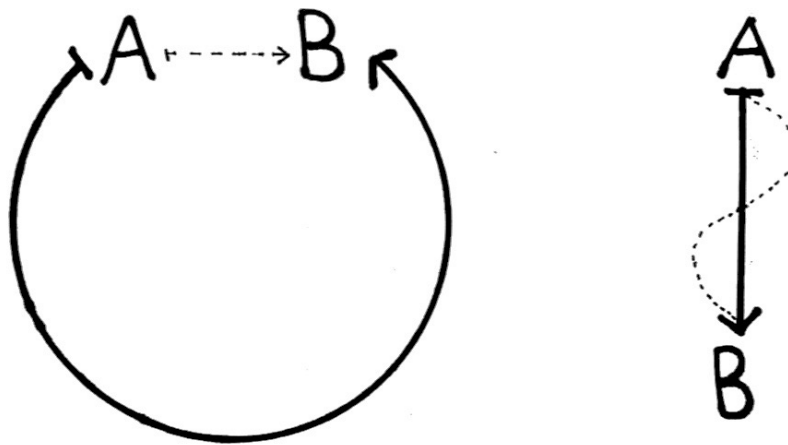


Figure 1: Circular Vs. Straight-Line Races



Consider a race from point A to point B such as in Figure 1. The black, bold line charts the intended course for the racers, and the gray, dotted line represents a potential delinquent route. The left, circular race is unideal because the delinquent race is quicker, easier, and more efficient for the runners. That is a cheatable race. On the right-hand side, the runners have to travel a straight, efficient line from point A to point B. Any delinquency or deviation from the race designer's original intent will not give a runner any advantage. In other words, the right-hand race will measure the runners' abilities, while the left-hand race will only measure the runners' abilities to the extent that they follow all the rules and run the intended course. Only in the straight race do the goals of the runners and the intent of the race designer line up in a transparent, fair assessment of skill. Many Baylor science courses are currently measuring their students with circular races. Learning and engaging with course content (the intent of the professor) is not necessarily the easiest and most efficient path to a good grade (the undeniable goal of many science students).

As an example of the straight-line race, consider Lang's uncheatable assignments (2013, p. 76). If a student has to demonstrate their expertise or ground their work in a current event or personal experience, the shortest path between A and B is nearly straight—there is few academically advantageous options other than completing the assignment as intended. Perhaps the clearest example of an uncheatable assignments is oral interviews. While nearly impossible to facilitate in a large, introductory science class where cheating is likely most prevalent, oral assignments force students to complete the course

objective as intended by the professor. Some may argue that removing the ability to cheat also removes the ability to be honest; students will not grow in their character unless they are faced with difficult ethical choices. In response, I argue that students will still have to choose to tackle their courses with integrity (there will never be no way to cheat at all), and that allowing students to cheat unsupervised through the internet, with no chance of retribution, does not simply give students the option to grow in integrity—it pressures them and incentivizes them to cheat. Preventing all cheating would be a fruitless goal, but Baylor should adapt regularly to student behavior in order to make cheating harder. Right now it is far too easy. The university must encourage professors to creatively use these “straight line” assignments, and the Office of Academic Integrity should check for compliance and recommend creative assignment alternatives through cheating audits.

### *Require Ethical Priming*

Ethical priming or reminding students to think about the rightness of their behavior has shown in cheating experiments to reduce cheating to nothing (Ariely, 2012, p. 40). This technique is so simple and so effective, that Baylor should require all of its professors to use it on all exams immediately. In Ariely’s experiments, it did not matter if students recited the ten commandments, read and signed the school honor code, or read and signed a fake honor code—requiring students to think ethically before taking a test is Baylor’s best defense against wandering eyes. At the very least, students should sign a statement on the front of their test acknowledging that the exam falls under the Baylor honor code which

says that “Baylor University students, staff, and faculty shall act in academic matters with the utmost honesty and integrity.” Such a reminder would greatly assist at least the students that I interviewed, many of whom told me one of the greatest sources of temptation to cheat in college was the mere ease with which they could peak off of their neighbor during test.

The one risk to universally requiring students to sign an honor code is that, with time, it could potentially become a robotic and unthoughtful action where students no longer read the statement and are therefore skipping the ethical priming. Ariely wrote that perhaps if students had to write the code in their own words, this process of desensitization would be slowed. (2012, p. 44). At Baylor, a simple prompt at the beginning of a test could read, “The Baylor Honor Code states that all students must act with utmost honesty and integrity. In one sentence, explain what it means to take this exam with utmost honesty and integrity.” This prompt, or others similar to it, would quickly prime students in a way that would likely become simply habit and wear off slower than a simple signature. In addition to written reminders, professors must be made aware of how effective a simple reminder at the beginning of a test can be. While some professors may fear that reminding students to be honest is either obvious or that it may give students bad ideas, ethical priming is a strong defense against the “in the moment” dishonest decisions that some students feel pressured to make.

### *Normalize Failure*

In the interviews, the students who expressed their commitment to integrity with the most strength and integrity were those who had come to gain

appreciation for failure. This does not mean failure per se by an academic standard but rather failure to meet a goal, to meet expectations, or to thrive. When students are convinced that are better off having been through failure than having only tasted success, they will be much less likely to see cheating as a valuable endeavor. When students know that they are robbing themselves of the opportunity to become something greater, perhaps they grow in their commitment to honesty. For this reason, I think Baylor should encourage professors, whether through the syllabus or just on the first day of class, to tell students that failure to achieve a goal is not nearly as devastating as the consequences of never having faced a setback. In particular, if professors would tell students stories of their own personal failures—anything from a poor grade in a class to career or research disappointments—students would have a living, breathing example of the strength and perseverance that comes from doing hard things and making good choices in the face of difficulty.

On the honor council, we often talk about the difficult decision for students to choose their integrity over their pride, their accomplishments, or their GPA. When a student is willing to cheat for a grade, they have clearly placed too much faith in classroom success and not enough in the personal strength that comes from being a man or a woman of integrity. Professors can fight this mistake with their personal stories as well. Perhaps professors are the best examples of this fact: personal virtues such as integrity, self-control, and wisdom are far more valuable than the grade for any single class on a transcript. The honor council, perhaps expanded in size and responsibilities, could help accomplish this

goal as well. While it considers how to help the honor code permeate the student culture and remain up-to-date with student practices, it can also consider how, through social media, orientation presentations, Lariat articles, and videos at Baylor sporting events, Baylor can inspire its student body to choose lives of virtue over moments of small success.

### *Conclusion*

In spite of all its success and all that is good about Baylor University, the school has a hidden problem that few mention—Baylor students cheat, and some feel so justified in doing so that they consider what is wrong to be correct. This problem breaks the feedback loop professors need to evaluate their classes to the detriment of all. In some classes, students feel pressured to cheat by the very structure of the course, and the ease on internet cheating and the disconnect between common student practice and the honor code help students justify their dishonesty. However, these problems do not have to stay. Through intentional action, rooted in the academic integrity literature and guided by the honest and anonymous confessions of students, Baylor can reduce cheating and restore confidence in its honor code. By involving students in an amendment process and an audit system, the school can make students feel that the integrity standards on campus are clear and reasonable. Through common-sense testing policy and ethical priming, professors can nearly eliminate test cheating, and by removing unoriginal and unsupervised online graded assignments, the school can reduce cheating even more. Finally, the school must insist to its students that it is only through failure that they will become all that they can be; it is through failure that

we grow and learn, and cheating promises success while stealing the very opportunity to flourish.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Research Questions of Study

Do students at Baylor University perceive their friends as cheaters based on their use of online resources?

1. What is their current perception of the Honor Code and what informs their perception?
2. How do they currently use online resources in order to complete assignments and prepare for examinations?
3. How do they perceive their friends' use of online resources and what informs their perception?
4. How willing are they to cheat and what factors do they consciously consider before making an ethical choice concerning academic integrity?



## APPENDIX B

### Interview Questions

Tell me about how familiar you are with the Baylor Honor Code. From where do you get your information?

[If they do not mention friends, ask:] What have you heard your friends say about the Baylor Honor Code?

Describe your current opinion of the Baylor Honor Code. Do you think Baylor is better off for having it? Why or why not? (1)

Do you think Baylor's system of academic integrity (including the Honor Code and the entire Honor Council process) treats all students fairly? Why or why not? (1)

What sorts of online resources have you found helpful to your studies in your high school and college career (for example, Quizlet, Chegg, etc.)? Describe how you use these resources. (2)

Do you have friends that use online resources (such as Quizlet, Chegg, etc.)? In what ways do you observe your peers using these resources? (3)

Do you ever think their use of online resources involves cheating? Why or why not? (3)

Have you ever noticed peers or classmates “cheating”? What did you notice them doing? And how did that make you feel? (3)

When using online resources, what sorts of things do you consider in order to determine whether your use is cheating or not? (4)

What do you think is the greatest source of temptation to cheat in college? (4)

Describe a situation in which you were tempted to cheat. What factors helped you consider whether or not to go through with cheating. (4)

How would your friends feel if they heard you violated the honor code? (4)

## APPENDIX C

### Snowball Stock Email

Hello there!

My name is Gage Hallbauer, and I am a Baylor senior working on my honors thesis project. My project involves interviewing fellow Baylor students to find out their perception of the Baylor honor code and academic integrity. The reason you are receiving this is because a friend of yours told me that you would be a great person to talk to!

The interview would be totally protected and anonymous, and it may even be fun, too! It should only take about 30 or 45 minutes. We can meet in any public place where you feel comfortable. Moody library works really well!

Would you be willing to be interviewed for my project? If so, when would be a good time to meet?

Thanks for considering!

Gage Hallbauer

## APPENDIX D

### Consent Form

PROTOCOL TITLE: Academic Integrity in the Age of the Internet: A Study of Baylor Student Perceptions

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Gage Hallbauer

THESIS MENTOR: Dr. Perry L. Glanzer

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this study is to better understand the Baylor student perception of online resources and how they apply to academic integrity. I am asking you to be a part of this study because you are a student at Baylor University.

Study activities: If you choose to be in the study, you will be asked to take part in an interview exploring your experience with academic integrity as a Baylor student.

#### Risks and Benefits:

To the best of our knowledge, there are no risks to you for taking part in this study. You may or may not benefit from taking part in this study. Possible benefits include having the opportunity to contribute to a thesis project that intends to suggest improvements and updates to the current Baylor honor code. In addition, others may benefit in the future from the scholarship that is produced from this study.

#### Confidentiality:

A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. I plan to protect your confidentiality to the very best of my ability. You will only ever be referred to by a pseudonym (fake name) in the thesis project in order to keep your identity concealed.

I will keep the records of this study confidential by storing them in an encrypted and password protected computer. I will make every effort to keep your records confidential. Authorized staff of Baylor University may review the study records for purposes such as quality control or safety. If any part of your interview is quoted in subsequent research articles or books, any identifying characteristics will be changed to protect your confidentiality. Remember, your participation is voluntary, you can choose to skip any question you would prefer not to answer, and you have the right to end the interview at any time without penalty or loss of

benefits to which you are entitled. You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Questions or concerns about this research study

You can call me or my thesis advisor with any concerns or questions about the research. Our telephone numbers are listed below:

Name: Gage Hallbauer  
Baylor University  
1001 Speight Ave. Apt. #150B  
Waco, TX 76706  
Ph: 936-647-5123  
Email: Gage\_Hallbauer@baylor.edu

Name: Dr. Perry Glanzer  
Institution(s): Baylor University  
Address: One Bear Place #97314  
Waco, Texas 76798-7314  
Phone #: (254)-710-7581  
Email: Perry\_Glanzer@bayor.edu

If you want to speak with someone not directly involved in this research study, you may contact the Baylor University IRB through the Office of the Vice Provost for Research at 254-710-1438. You can talk to them about:

- Your rights as a research subject
- Your concerns about the research
- A complaint about the research

Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to stop at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential. Information already collected about you cannot be deleted.

By continuing with the research and completing the study activities, you are providing consent.

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