ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: Exploring the Relationship Between Moral Reasoning and
                             Students' Understanding of the Honor Code at the
                             University of Maryland

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        This mixed methods study explored the relationship between moral reasoning and

students' understanding of the honor code at the University of Maryland. The Defining

Issues Test, version 2 (DIT2) was administered to 400 students residing in University

housing in order to assess students' level of moral reasoning. Based on their scores on

the DIT2, students were divided into three groups; those who scored high, medium, and

low. Fifteen students were purposefully selected to participate in qualitative interviews

to explore their understanding of the honor code.

        Data from the individual interviews illustrated that students understood the honor

code in various ways including how they made meaning of the honor code, how they

interpreted the honor code, and their attitudes towards the honor code. Specifically

students at the highest level of moral reasoning believed that the honor code was common

sense and therefore did not differentiate between the honor code and the honor pledge

because the principle of academic dishonesty is evident in both. Students who scored in

the middle of the other two groups believed that students' behavior was influenced by

their values and judged the morality of actions by comparing their actions to actions that

were socially acceptable. They focused on the importance of following the honor code

because of its importance to the community. Finally, students who scored lowest on the DIT2 believed that the honor code was necessary so that students would not cheat. The meaning they made of the honor code was based on the honor code as a set of rules. They defined right behavior, in this case following the honor code, by what was in their own best interest. Students' attitudes toward cheating also emerged as a result of the analysis of the interview with students.

Despite the differences found between students in this study, there were several findings that were consistent across all three groups of students. Students in the study had a favorable attitude toward the honor code and reported that they did not engage in academic dishonesty while in college. However, students in all three groups reported that they did not believe that the honor code directly impacted their behavior or the behavior of their peers at the University. They believed that faculty and peer behavior were more influential in their decisions regarding academic integrity than the honor code. Students in the study were reluctant to report their peers for academic dishonesty and many of the students focused on the importance of grades.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MORAL REASONING AND
STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE HONOR CODE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

By

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DEDICATION

This works is dedicated to my sons, Christopher and Zachary, and to my nieces and nephews, David, Michael, Jordan, Tara and Alexis.

I hope that life brings you as much joy as you have each brought to my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I   INTRODUCTION

Honesty in academic work is a necessary and indispensable value in university life, and

its violation cannot be condoned. (Hoekema, 1990, p.70)

Introduction

Cheating occurs in nearly every aspect of our society (Callahan, 2004; McCabe,

Trevino & Butterfield, 1999). Since the turn of the millennium, significant incidences of

cheating in business, sports, and academics have been widely reported in the media. Two

of the most widely publicized incidents are the bankruptcy of Enron Corporation in

December 2001 and the collapse of WorldCom Corporation in 2002. Enron was the

largest bankruptcy in the history of the United States. The fall of Enron was, in large

part, due to fraud and insider trading by executives in the company including the Chief

Executive Officer and the Chief Financial Officer. WorldCom, a major

telecommunications company, was accused by the government of an 11 billion dollar

accounting fraud that ultimately led to the collapse of the company.   This is the biggest

corporate failure in the history of the United States (Masters, 2005).

The sports world, particularly Major League Baseball, has struggled with multiple

allegations of steroid use among athletes. At spring training in 2003, Baltimore Orioles

pitcher, Steve Bechler, died after using a dietary supplement containing ephredra. Since

then steroid use among players has continued to populate the media.   In December 2004,

the *New York Times* reported that Jason Giambi of the New York Yankees admitted to a

grand jury that he illegally used steroids to enhance his performance (Kepner, 2004).

Similar allegations have been made against baseball players Barry Bonds, Alex

Rodriquez, Mark McGwire and others in recent years (Callahan, 2004).

After endorsing author James Frey's book, *A Million Little Pieces*, in her television book club, the popular talk show host Oprah Winfrey found herself in the midst of controversy. When it was revealed that the author fabricated significant details in the book which was supposed to be a memoir, Winfrey stood by the author at first. Later she admitted that she misled the public by leading them to believe that the truth was unimportant (Kurtz, 2006).

At the same time that these ethical and moral transgressions occur in the larger society, many students engage in similar behaviors while in high school. According to the Center for Academic Integrity, nearly seventy-five percent of high school students admit to academic dishonesty. A study of 4,500 students at 25 high schools, conducted in 2000 and 2001, revealed that 74% admitted to cheating on a major exam (http://www.academicintegrity.org/cai_research.asp retrieved February 25, 2005).

Given the prevalence of academic dishonesty in high school and the breaches of moral character that are dominating society, it is not surprising that cheating in college is pervasive (Davis, Grover, Becker & McGregor,1992; Gehring & Pavela, 1994). Studies conducted over the past several decades indicate that between 75 and 95 percent of college students have admitted to academic dishonesty. Bowers' (1964) study of college students in the 1960s revealed that 75 percent of the participants acknowledged committing academic dishonesty at least once during college. Nearly twenty years later, Baird (1980) found that 75 percent of college students admitted to cheating at least once. Three decades later, McCabe (1992) found that 67.4% of students indicated that they had cheated at least once in college. Most recently, McCabe and Trevino (1997) reported

that as many as 95% of undergraduates participated in some form of academic dishonesty, at least once, while in college.

Faced with such high rates of academic dishonesty, many institutions have adopted policies and practices designed to deter students from engaging in behaviors that constitute academic dishonesty. Faculty and administrators have sought ways to communicate the importance of honoring truth, honesty, and integrity in academic work through the use of honor codes. Although honor codes may vary in content, an honor code is a set of guidelines that address a university's policies and procedures regarding academic integrity (McCabe & Pavela, 1993). The goal of an honor code is to deter academic dishonesty among students and create a culture of honesty, integrity, and personal responsibility among the students, faculty and staff at an institution (McCabe & Pavela, 2000; McCabe & Trevino, 2002).

 According to researchers, honor codes are one of the most effective means of deterring academic dishonesty (Bowers, 1964; Campbell, 1935; Canning; 1956; McCabe & Trevino, 1993; McCabe et al, 1996; 1999; Trevino, McCabe & Butterfield, 1999). Institutions that have adopted honor codes report less cheating than schools without an honor code (May & Loyd, 1993; McCabe, Butterfield & Trevino, 2002; McCabe & Trevino, 1993). May and Loyd (1993) examined the incidence of college cheating at a university with an honor code and compared their results with a study conducted by Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff, and Clark in 1986. May and Loyd found that 23.7% of the students at the honor code institution in their study reported cheating, compared to 54.1% of the students in the Haines et al (1986) study. McCabe and Trevino (1993) found that 78% of students at non-code institutions in their sample admitted to cheating, but only

57% did so at institutions with honor codes. According to the Center for Academic Integrity, the results of three studies conducted in the 1990s found that serious cheating on examinations on campuses with honor codes was typically one-third to one-half lower than at institutions without an honor code. Cheating on written assignments was also significantly less. One reason for the lower incidences of cheating may be that honor codes provide students with specific expectations regarding their behavior as well as the consequences of his/her behavior if he/she violates the honor code (McCabe & Trevino, 1993).

Traditional honor codes consist of a mandatory reporting element that requires students to report academic misconduct they observe. Students who violate the honor code are permanently expelled from the institution. Recently, some institutions of higher education have adopted a "modified" honor code. A modified honor code does not have the traditional elements of an honor code such as unproctored examinations and automatic penalties for those who violate the code. A modified honor code gives students a major role in the judicial process without mandating unproctored exams or automatic penalties that are typically very severe (McCabe & Pavela, 2000). Honor councils comprised of all students or a majority of students are charged with adjudicating violations of the honor code. Student members of the honor council are also charged with educating the campus community about academic policies and procedures. McCabe and Pavela suggested that modified code institutions utilize closer collaboration and partnerships with faculty members and administrators than traditional honor code institutions. This collaboration between faculty and administrators strengthens the message that academic dishonesty is an institutional value. At many institutions, an

honor council comprised only of students is charged with resolving cases of academic

dishonesty. Significant student involvement in the administration of the honor code

suggests to students that the institution is committed to academic integrity and

encourages students to take responsibility for their own behavior (McCabe & Pavela,

2000). The University of Maryland, the University of California at Davis, and Kansas

State University have each adopted modified honor codes in the past decade (McCabe &

Pavela, 2000).

Moral Development

According to McCabe and Pavela (1993) colleges and universities adopt an honor

code to reduce academic dishonesty and "establish the value of integrity" (p.28) among

students. An honor code cannot directly change student behavior. However, an honor

code can be effective if it influences student behavior by stating clear expectations,

stating the consequences of academic dishonesty, and helping students to understand the

value of academic honesty (Hall & Kuh, 1998; McCabe & Trevino,1993). McCabe and

Trevino (1993) found that academic dishonesty is positively associated with perceptions

of peers' academic dishonesty. In other words, peer behavior provides a kind of

"normative support for cheating" (p. 533). Furthermore, at honor code institutions where

students have primary responsibility for upholding the value of academic integrity,

"moral norms" are more likely to be activated and influence student behavior (McCabe,

Trevino & Butterfield, 1999). According to Kurtines and Gewitz (1984), moral norms are

moral rules. "Do not steal," "be honest," and "do not cheat" are examples of moral norms

which society has determined to be principles of right and wrong (Kurtines & Gewitz).

McCabe and Trevino (1993) suggested that honor codes clarify expectations for students

which may make it more difficult for students to rationalize behavior that constitutes academic dishonesty.

Honor codes affect the way students reason about academic integrity. McCabe and Trevino (1999) found that students at honor code institutions view the issue of academic integrity in a "fundamentally different way from students at non-code institutions" (p. 229). In a qualitative investigation, students were asked to provide open ended comments regarding the effectiveness of the policies on their campus and the prevalence of academic dishonesty. McCabe and Trevino concluded that students at honor code institutions accepted significant responsibility for their own behavior regarding academic integrity and viewed academic integrity as a part of the culture of the institution. Although this research is promising, a great deal is still unknown about the influence that honor codes have on student behavior related to academic integrity.

Moral development is one lens through which institutional leaders seek to understand the ethical conduct of college students. In fact, the influence that college has on student moral development has been the focus of a large body of research (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Modern moral development theory has been influenced largely by the work of Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg began his research in moral development when writing his dissertation in the 1950s. Kohlberg's early work focused on results gathered from an analysis of adolescent boys' responses to hypothetical moral dilemmas. As Kohlberg's scholarship evolved, he developed a stage theory of moral development. Kohlberg's (1976) theory of moral development posits that development occurs in a sequential, or stage format, from lower to higher stages. In order to move from one stage

to the next, one must experience structural disequilibrium or cognitive conflict (Kohlberg, 1981).

Kohlberg's theory is considered a cognitive-developmental approach to moral reasoning because it focuses on the development of moral judgment (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Kohlberg's theory does not focus on an individual's behavior, but rather on an individual's reasoning process used to explain a particular behavior. More specifically, his theory explores the reasons for how people make moral judgments.

According to Pascarella and Terrenzini's (2005) review of the literature on moral development, attending college has a positive influence on increases in principled moral reasoning. Upperclass students tend to have higher levels of principled reasoning than freshman and sophomore students. Students also differ in their level of moral judgment development when entering college. These differences will likely influence their experiences at college and the choices they make during their college years including their decisions about whether to commit academic dishonesty. Previous evidence suggests that there may be a link between moral reasoning and academic integrity (Leming, 1978; Malinowski & Smith; 1985; Nuss, 1981).

Honor codes are intended to influence students' reasoning and behavior regarding academic integrity (McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield, 1999). Students enter college with varied levels of moral reasoning which is a component of moral development. Moral reasoning is the cognitive process by which an individual makes a judgment or decision (Rest, 1979). Given the variability in the level of moral reasoning of college students, it is likely that honor codes are understood and interpreted differently by college students depending on their level of moral development. This study explores the relationship

between moral reasoning and students' understanding of the honor code. Understanding the relationship between moral reasoning and students' understanding and interpretation of an honor code is helpful because it can assist colleges and university leaders in implementing, communicating, and upholding an honor code.

<div align="center">Statement of Problem</div>

In a brief prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, Maramark and Maline (1993) noted that 30 years of research "suggests that academic dishonesty is a chronic problem" (p. 4).   A review of the literature on academic integrity showed that much of the prior research has focused on issues such as the prevalence of academic dishonesty, reasons why students engage in academic dishonesty, the characteristics of students who commit academic dishonesty, and the methods students use to commit acts of dishonesty. Prior research has also examined the levels of academic dishonesty at schools with honor codes and schools without codes (McCabe & Trevino, 1993). Studies have explored the relationship between institutional honor codes and student attitudes and behaviors related to academic dishonesty (Hall & Kuh, 1998). However, results of these studies suggest that little is known about how individual students understand and interpret honor codes.

Prior research suggests that academic dishonesty is significantly correlated with students understanding and acceptance of academic integrity policies (McCabe & Trevino, 1993). For decades, theorists have explored the ways in which individuals make moral decisions and judgments, but little research has investigated the relationship between moral reasoning and academic dishonesty. In my review of the literature, I have not found empirical studies assessing how moral judgment is related to students' understanding and interpretation of an honor code.

Purpose

This study seeks to expand the scholarship on academic integrity by examining the relationship between moral reasoning and a policy (an honor code) designed to promote academic integrity. This study explores how students' moral reasoning relates to their understanding and interpretation of an honor code. In order to successfully respond to academic dishonesty in higher education, it is necessary to explore how students understand and interpret issues related to academic integrity, including policies that are designed to deter academic dishonesty. Knowing more about how the moral development and the moral reasoning of college students is related to students' understanding and interpretations of these issues, can aid institutional leaders in their efforts to reduce academic dishonesty.

Specifically, the following question guided this research:

How does undergraduate students' moral reasoning relate to their understanding of an honor code?

For the purpose of this study, the term "understanding" was explored in several ways. Specifically, this study explored students' attitudes toward the honor code, how they interpreted the code, and how they made sense of the honor code at the institution. Individual interview questions explored whether students believe the honor code has an impact on an individuals' behavior and the behavior of other students. This study also explored how students interpreted the honor code and the specific behaviors that are prohibited by the honor code. Moral reasoning was measured using the Defining Issues Test (Rest, 1979).

Theoretical Framework

Lawrence Kohlberg is perhaps the best known theorist in the area of moral development. His theory of moral development, which built on the work Jean Piaget, describes linear stages of moral development. Kohlberg (1976) identified six stages of moral reasoning that are each divided into three levels. Within each of the three levels, Kohlberg identified two stages which successively build upon the previous stage(s). Development occurs in a sequential format as the individual moves through or progresses from a lower stage to a higher stage. The progression is dependant upon the individual's interaction with his/her environment and often results from encountering a cognitive conflict or period of "disequilibrium" (Kohlberg, 1976). Movement from one stage to the next denotes a significant increase in the individual's moral maturity and level of moral reasoning. Central to Kohlberg's theory is his view that it is the individual who decides what is morally right and wrong, not society (Rest, 1994). Individuals display different levels of moral maturity and typically do not progress through these stages at the same rate. While it is desirable to reach the higher stages of moral reasoning as one matures, age is not a factor in reaching a higher stage of development. Kohlberg believed that advancement to a higher stage of moral development occurs when an individual experiences moral conflict because moral conflict serves as a stimulus for moral development. Although desirable, not everyone will reach the highest levels of moral reasoning.

James Rest (1986b) adapted and expanded Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Rest believed that the stage model of moral development was too simplistic. Rather than viewing moral development as progressing in a step by step

manner, Rest (1979) offered that an individual may shift between stages at different

points in time. Rest, like Kohlberg, proposed a six stage model of moral judgment.

However, he also developed a framework for determining morality which is known as the

Four Component Model of Morality (1984). The model includes moral sensitivity, moral

judgment, moral motivation and moral character. Rest posited that all four processes

need to occur for an individual to behave morally.

Rest (1979) agreed with Kohlberg that moral judgment is an important factor in

determining moral action. Specifically, Rest posited that a person's stage of moral

development provides an indication of the interpretive framework that she/he brings to a

moral problem. In other words, the way an individual interprets a problem impacts that

person's decision-making. This premise has important implications for this study which

explores the relationship between moral reasoning and how students understand and

interpret the honor code.

Rest's work is also important to this research because he designed the instrument

which was used in this study to assess moral judgment. The Defining Issues Test (DIT)

is one of the most widely used instruments for measuring moral judgment in college

students (King & Mayhew, 2002; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 1991). Research using the

DIT has provided significant evidence regarding its ability to measure moral judgment

development (Rest et al, 1999). A recently revised version of the DIT known as the DIT2

was used in this study. The Defining Issues Test, version two (DIT2) consists of five

moral dilemmas, each with twelve comments related to the dilemma. Subjects must rank

the importance of each of the comments in deciding how the dilemma should be resolved.

Design and Methodology

This study used a mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 1998). Two phases of data collection were conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The first phase of the study used a quantitative instrument to measure moral judgment of participants. Each participant was administered the Defining Issues Test, version two (DIT2), to measure their stage of moral reasoning. The DIT2 was administered by the Department of Resident Life at the University of Maryland as a part of their annual assessment process.

Using the results of the DIT2, the researcher conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 15 individuals to gather additional data for this study. Individual interviews were conducted to explore how students understood and interpreted the honor code. At the conclusion of the interviews, comparisons were made between the student's level of moral reasoning and his/her responses to questions in the individual interviews.

Site

The institution chosen for this study, the University of Maryland, is a large state institution that adopted an honor code in 1991. The adoption of the honor code was, in part, a response to student leaders who had expressed an interest in reducing the prevalence of academic dishonesty on the campus. The University modeled its honor code, the *Code of Academic Integrity,* after the University of Virginia's honor code. The University of Virginia is a traditional honor code institution with a single sanction penalty of expulsion for students who violate the code. Administrators at the University of Maryland were reluctant to adopt such a strict penalty because it was believed that such a strict penalty, which removes students from the institution permanently, was

inconsistent with the University's educational mission. The University adopted a more educational sanction for students found responsible for academic dishonesty rather than expulsion which can be viewed as a strictly punitive approach.   A moderate sanction of an XF (failure due to academic dishonesty) is the standard sanction for students found responsible for academic dishonesty. However, students may be given a more or less severe sanction based on the particular circumstances of the behavior.

The University of Maryland was the first institution to develop the concept of a modified honor code when it adopted the *Code of Academic Integrity* (http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/history.html, date retrieved October 5, 2005). As stated previously, a "modified code" does not have a mandatory penalty for academic dishonesty and does not have unproctored examinations or mandatory reporting requirements, as typically required by traditional honor codes. However, as a modified code institution, the University focuses on communicating the value of academic integrity and allowing students to play a significant role in the judicial and hearing processes related to cases of academic dishonesty (McCabe, et al., 2002). In 2001, the University Senate adopted and added an honor pledge to the *Code of Academic Integrity*. The pledge was designed to enhance awareness among students and faculty that the University takes academic integrity seriously. The honor pledge requires students to state the following on academic examinations and assignments: "I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination or assignment" (*Code of Academic Integrity*, 2001).

The University of Maryland was chosen as the site for this research for two reasons. First, it is one of a few large, public universities that have a modified honor

code. Second, according to Creswell (1998), the researcher must have contacts that can facilitate entry into a site and be able to manage the logistics in getting to the site and collecting the data for the study. This is particularly important when qualitative methods, such as the interviews in this study, are used to collect data. The University of Maryland was easily accessible to the researcher and met these criteria.

Data Collection

Data for this project came from the Defining Issues Test, version two (DIT2) and individual interviews with students. For the purposes of this study, the researcher worked with the Director of Research and Assessment to collect data through the Department of Resident Life. A random sample of approximately 400 students out of approximately 10,000 students living in the on-campus residence halls at the University were chosen for this study. Annually, during the first two weeks of the spring semester, the Department of Resident Life conducts the Residence Hall Evaluation Project (RHEP) in conjunction with the Department's bi-annual room verification process. The RHEP is administered to approximately 2,000 students to determine student satisfaction in the residence halls. However, a much smaller number of students were selected to take the DIT2. For the purpose of this study, the DIT2 was administered to identify a group of students who were at varying stages of moral development. The primary researcher worked with the Director of Research and Assessment to randomly select students to complete the DIT2, in an effort to gather a large enough sample size to achieve this goal and to keep costs low. It was projected based on return rates in previous studies that the return rate would be approximately 90%. A return rate of 81% was achieved. The instrument was

administered and individually collected by the Resident Assistant staff at the same time as the RHEP to ensure a high return rate.

For the qualitative data collection, students were selected to participate in individual interviews based on their score on the DIT2. Specifically, students who scored low, medium, and high (as compared to the entire sample) on the DIT were recruited in order to obtain a varied group of students. The Director of Research and Assessment in the Department of Resident Life, as well as the Resident Assistant staff, assisted the researcher in contacting the students who were invited to participate in the individual interviews. At the time the DIT2 was administered, students were asked to fill out a form indicating whether or not they would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. The purposeful sample for the qualitative interviews was selected only from those students who indicated they would be willing to be contacted. Interviews were arranged with each participant individually. Fifteen students were chosen to participate in individual interviews in order to gather a diverse group of students with varying levels of moral judgment. In order to conduct an in-depth exploration of the relationship between moral judgment and students understanding of the honor code, students at high, medium and low levels of moral development were selected.

Interviews were important to this research because this study explored how students understand and interpret a policy, the honor code. Interviews are a necessary form of data collection when a researcher cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them (Merriam, 1998).

The researcher conducted one interview with each participant lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Initially, open-ended interview questions, guided by the

research questions for this study, were explored. Additional questions emerged from conversations with participants. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Additionally, notes were taken during each session to record non-verbal reactions, reflections, and observations.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis on the DIT2 was conducted by the Center for the Study of Ethical Development through a scoring service. The scoring service calculated means and standard deviations for the sample as a whole, then used the first digit of the ID number as a basis for creating subgroups and did t-test contrasts on all the subgroups. These statistics are routinely completed by the scoring service.

Following the results from the DIT2, the primary investigator worked with the Director of Research and Assessment in the Department of Resident Life to identify, through randomn sampling, 15 individuals with varying moral judgment scores to be individually interviewed. Fifteen students were purposefully selected, from those students who agreed to be contacted for a follow-up interview, in order to obtain an equal number of students who had high, medium, or low principled moral reasoning scores. The results of the students' moral judgment scores were not known to the primary investigator at the time of the individual interviews in order to eliminate researcher bias.

Data analysis procedures for the interviews followed the steps outlined in Creswell (2003). Data from the individual interviews were transcribed. The primary researcher read through all of the transcriptions and data to get a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning. Detailed analysis using a coding process was then conducted. The coding process involved organizing the materials into

themes and categories, generating a description of the participants, and labeling the categories. Next, the coding process was used to generate a detailed description of the categories and themes for analysis. Using the descriptions and themes that were generated, short narratives were constructed to convey the findings of the data analysis and develop meaningful conclusions**.**

<div align="center">Significance of Study</div>

This study is important for several reasons. It explores the relationship between undergraduate students' moral reasoning and their understanding and interpretation of an honor code. It adds to a small body of literature on the impact of honor codes as a deterrent to academic dishonesty among undergraduate students. Secondly, it provides a richer understanding of how the moral reasoning of undergraduate students is related to students' understanding of an honor code and, more broadly, academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is a serious problem in higher education that has implications for the larger society. Studies have linked academic dishonesty in college to dishonesty in careers (Nonis & Swift 2001; Sims, 1993). This study assists institutional leaders in understanding the challenges that they may face in combating academic dishonesty by exploring how students understand and make sense of honor codes which are designed to deter academic dishonesty. If, for example, students with a higher principled moral reasoning score (P-score) have a better understanding and more favorable interpretation of an honor code then institutional leaders and faculty may attempt to find ways to increase moral reasoning among students. Institutional leaders and especially student affairs staff often seek ways to increase the moral development of students through co-curricular or classroom interventions with the goal of fostering

increases in students' moral reasoning. Specific interventions with the goal of increasing

moral reasoning among students in order to foster a stronger understanding of the Honor

Code could be useful in addressing the problem of academic dishonesty on campus.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

Academic dishonesty: any of the following acts, when committed by a student constitute

academic dishonesty at the University of Maryland:

> **Cheating**: intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials,
>
> information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
>
> **Fabrication**: intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any
>
> information or citation in an academic exercise.
>
> **Facilitation of academic dishonesty**: intentionally or knowingly helping or
>
> attempting to help another violate any provision of the institution's code of
>
> academic integrity.
>
> **Plagiarism**: intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another
>
> as one's own in any academic exercise.

These definitions are provided to the University of Maryland community in the *Code of*

Academic Integrity **(**http://www.shc.umd.edu/code.html, retrieved October 5, 2005)

Honor Code: A clearly established set of goals and expectations for upholding academic

honesty. According to McCabe and Pavela (2000) an honor code typically includes at

least two of the following elements: (1) the use of a written pledge; (2) students comprise

the majority of the judiciary that hears alleged violations of academic dishonesty; (3)

unproctored examinations; and (4) student reporting requirements.

Honor Pledge: A statement which undergraduate and graduate students should be asked by their instructors to write by hand and sign on examinations, papers and other academic assignments. The Honor Pledge at the University of Maryland reads "I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination" (*Code of Academic Integrity*, 2001, p. 1).

Modified Honor Code: A set of guidelines for students regarding academic integrity that include significant student involvement in designing and enforcing academic integrity policies, and in educating other students about the importance of academic integrity. Typically, modified honor code institutions lack elements of a traditional honor code institutions, such as unproctored exams and mandatory reporting requirements by students (McCabe, Trevino et al., 2002).

Moral Development: This concept refers to the development of moral thinking and action. According to Rest (1986a, 1994), moral development is a combination of four components in the production of a moral act: moral sensitivity; moral judgment; moral motivation; and finally execution of the act.

Moral Judgment/Reasoning: The cognitive skills individuals use to determine which course of action to take when faced with an ethical or moral dilemma (Rest, 1986a).

Moral Sensitivity: The ability of an individual to consider how each course of action will impact others (Rest, 1986a).

Moral Motivation: involves the extent of commitment that an individual makes toward the moral course of action (Rest, 1986a).

Understanding: For the purposes of this study the term understanding relates to three aspects; students' attitudes toward the honor code, their interpretation of the code, and the meaning they make of the honor code.

Conclusion

Academic dishonesty is a serious and pervasive problem in higher education that cannot be ignored. Institutional leaders must take initiative and responsibility for deterring and preventing academic dishonesty. One way that many institutions of higher education have tried to do this is through the adoption of an honor code. The goal of an honor code is to create a culture among faculty, staff and students that promote the values of honesty, integrity, and personal responsibility (McCabe & Pavela, 2000; McCabe & Trevino, 2002; McCabe et al, 1999). Research suggests that institutions with honor codes have had some success in reducing the prevalence of academic dishonesty (May & Loyd, 1993; McCabe, Butterfield & Trevino, 2002; McCabe & Trevino, 1993). Prior to this study, it was not known how students made sense of honor codes or if students understood or interpreted the meaning of an honor code differently based on his/her level of moral reasoning. This study explored whether a relationship exists between students' moral reasoning and their understanding and interpretation of an honor code. If institutions of higher education are committed to reducing academic dishonesty, this insight is critical.

CHAPTER II   LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature on which this study is based. It is divided in two major sections, one focused on Moral Development and one on Academic Integrity, each with several subsections. The first section describes key theories of moral development considered relevant to this study. The first section also includes a description of the Defining Issues Test, the instrument used in this study to measure student moral judgment.   Next, the literature on academic dishonesty in higher education is described. This section provides a description of the prevalence of academic dishonesty, reasons why students engage in academic dishonesty and student attitudes toward academic dishonesty. The final section explores the literature on the connection between academic dishonesty and moral judgment.

Moral Development

It is well-documented that the college environment promotes moral development in students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Much of the research in the area of moral development focuses on moral judgment, which is one aspect of moral development. "Moral judgment is a psychological construct that characterizes the process by which people determine that one course of action in a particular situation is morally right, and another course of action is wrong" (Edwards, Rest, & Thoma, 1997, p.5). Moral judgment involves defining what the moral issues are, how conflicts among parties are to be settled, and the rationale for deciding on a course of action (Edwards et. al, 1997). Psychologists (e.g., Kohlberg, 1984; Piaget, 1932/1965) have described a developmental progression in how people make moral judgments. In general, development is said to

progress from making judgments largely influenced by immediately perceived, self-interest factors, to making judgments on the basis of a concern for others and the concern for greater good.

Foundations for Moral Development Theory

In 1785, Immanual Kant wrote the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, a prominent work in moral philosophy. Kant's work marked the beginning stages of the study of morality. However, it was not until more recent times that the field of moral development, as we currently understand it, emerged. John Dewey (1921), proposed that moral development is the process that occurs from humans' interactions with the environment. According to Dewey moral development and cognitive development are the primary goals of education.

In the 1950s, Jean Piaget greatly influenced the way psychologists view child development and how educators develop curricula for children. Piaget's research was largely concerned with the process by which children reason. Piaget (1966) believed both maturation and environment are essential to moral development. According to Piaget, all development occurs as a result of an individual's interactions with their environment. Furthermore, he believed that individuals define morality differently based on their individual struggles to arrive at fair resolutions to moral dilemmas.

Piaget defined the four stages of a child's cognitive development in his 1966 book, *The Psychology of the Child*. Piaget's theory was one of the first positing a sequential process of development. His theory laid the foundation for moral development because he suggested a stage model of development in children. The stage model of development is commonly used in modern moral development theories. His cognitive

development theory states that children, from birth to adolescence, progress through four unique stages of development beginning with sensori-motor (birth to 2 years). In this stage children begin to react to stimuli, move toward objects and begin early forms of communication. Preoperational thought (2-7 years) and concrete operations (7-12 years) describe the middle two stages. It is in these two stages where children begin to think on their own, illogically at first and then more concretely and logically in the latter stage. According to Piaget, formal operations is the final stage of development when children begin to think more abstractly and even hypothetically.

Lawrence Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg is perhaps the most well-known theorist in the area of moral development. His theory of moral development, which built on the work of Piaget, describes linear stages of moral development.   Kohlberg identified six stages of moral reasoning that are categorized into three levels. Within each level there are two stages which successively build upon the previous stages. Individuals display different levels of moral maturity and typically do not progress through these stages at the same rate. It is desirable to reach the higher stages of moral reasoning as one matures. However, a person's age is not a factor in the process of advancing from one stage to the next. As one matures in age, they will not automatically advance to the next stage. Therefore, not everyone will reach the highest levels of moral reasoning.

Central to Kohlberg's theory is his view that the individual decides what is morally right and wrong, not society (Rest, 1994). Development occurs in a sequential format as the individual moves through or progresses from a lower stage to a higher stage. Like Dewey and Piaget, Kohlberg believed that this progression is dependent upon

the individual's interaction with his/her environment and is often the result of encountering a cognitive conflict or "disequilibrium" (Kohlberg, 1976). More specifically, an individual encounters a moral dilemma where one value is in conflict with another.

Kohlberg (1976) developed his theory after conducting a series of studies in which he presented his subjects with hypothetical moral dilemmas. He developed a scoring system for how subjects responded to the dilemmas. Based on the reasons given by the subjects, Kohlberg found that a pattern emerged from the responses. He developed three levels of moral development from the patterns that emerged. The levels are divided into the Preconventional level (stages 1 and 2), the Conventional level (stages 3 and 4) and the Postconventional level (stages 5 and 6). Table 2.1 provides a brief overview of Kohlberg's Theory.

Table 2.1. Kohlberg's (1976) Theory of Moral Development

Level	Stage
Preconventional : Individuals are concerned with whether their behavior is considered by others to be good or bad	*Stage 1 Punishment and Obedience Orientation* Avoiding punishment is the primary motivation for behavior. *Stage 2 Instrumental Relativist Orientation* Right behavior is defined by what is in one's own best interest.
Conventional : Individuals demonstrate a concern for the welfare of others	*Stage 3 Interpersonal Concordance Orientation* Individuals seek approval of others. *Stage 4 Law & Order Orientation* Individuals desire to uphold the laws established by society and define what is "right" based on the established laws.
Postconventional or Principled : Individuals define Moral values in terms of universal fairness and justice	*Stage 5 Social Contract Orientation* Individuals value certain principles which may or may not conform to laws. *Stage 6 Universal-Ethical Principle Orientation* Individuals attempt to follow a set of ethical principles that he/she believes are right and ethical rather than what society deems right or ethical.

The Preconventional level is characterized by a strong sense of personal welfare where individuals are concerned with whether their behavior is considered by others to be good or bad. Individuals are also largely concerned with punishment in these two stages. This level of moral development can often be observed in pre-adolescent children. Individuals behave in socially acceptable ways to avoid punishment. During stage one,

the *punishment and obedience orientation*, avoiding punishment is the primary

motivation for behavior. At stage two, *instrumental relativist-orientation*, right behavior

is defined by what is in one's own best interest. In this stage, individuals show an

interest in the needs of others, but only where it might further one's own interests

(Kohlberg, 1976).

In the Conventional level individuals "demonstrate a concern for the welfare of

others" (Kohlberg, 1976 p. 32). This level is typical of adolescents and adults. Persons

who reason at this stage demonstrate a concern for others and judge the morality of action

by comparing their actions to actions that are socially acceptable. In stage three,

interpersonal concordance orientation, individuals seek the approval of others. Concern

is centered on maintaining one's image as a good person and gaining the approval of

others. Individuals have learned that conforming and living up to the expectations of

others has inherent value. Individuals at this stage may judge the morality of an action

based on the consequences an action may have on a person's relationship with others. A

person in stage four, "*law & order" orientation*, moves beyond the need for approval

from others and focuses on the importance of obeying laws and social order because of

the importance of maintaining society. In stage 4, individuals desire to uphold the laws

established by society and define what is "right" based on the established laws (Kohlberg,

1976).

Finally, in the Postconventional or Principled level, individuals define moral

values in terms of universal fairness and justice. The basis of reasoning in the final two

stages is a view of morality as a set of universal principles for making choices. In stage

5, the *social contract orientation*, individuals value certain principles which may or may

not conform to laws, but generally people at this stage believe the rules of the group should be followed. The prevailing notion in this stage is that one must do what is considered best for the greater society. In stage 6, moral reasoning reflects the *universal-ethical principle orientation*, which is an attempt to follow a set of ethical principles that the individual believes are right and ethical rather than what society deems right or ethical. Kohlberg believes this stage exists but acknowledges that few people ever attain this stage of moral judgment (Kohlberg, 1976).

To ascertain one's level of moral reasoning and movement from one level of moral reasoning to another, Kohlberg (1976) used moral dilemmas to determine how individuals reason and make judgments about moral issues. Kohlberg's theory relied on hypothetical dilemmas. The dilemmas were useful in developing his model because they helped him to understanding how individuals reason about moral issues. According to Kohlberg (1981), morality encompasses more than just moral reasoning, it also includes moral action. Moral action is "the process by which people arrive at moral decisions and take action on the basis of those decisions" (p.35). Kohlberg's theory can only help us to explain where students are in terms of their moral development but it cannot predict what action they will take if they are faced with an actual moral dilemma. However, Kohlberg and Candee (1984) argued that moral reasoning is the most important determinant of moral behavior. Several studies suggest that there is a positive link between principled moral reasoning and moral behavior including resistance to cheating (Leming, 1978; Malinowski & Smith, 1985; Schwartz et. al, 1969).

Kohlberg also argued that an "action is not moral unless it is generated by both moral reasoning and motives" (1981, p. 36). Specifically, without inquiring into the

motives and judgments that underlie a decision, one cannot judge whether the conduct is moral. Kohlberg also argued that individual's moral action frequently takes place in a social or group context. Furthermore, that context has a significant influence on the moral decision making of individuals. In other words, individual moral action is a function of group norms (Kohlberg, 1981).

Kohlberg's assertion can be important in understanding student behavior regarding academic integrity. Specifically, the realization that group norms or the "moral environment" of the institution as it relates to academic integrity can influence individual moral action. McCabe and Trevino (1993) found that the single most important predictor of cheating for an individual student is that student's perception of peer behavior. On campuses where cheating was perceived to be the norm, individual students reported the highest levels of cheating.

Honor codes are designed to positively affect group norms as they relate to academic integrity on a college campus (McCabe & Trevino, 1993). Accordingly, the understanding of such policies by students is necessary, if not essential, to effecting group norms and individual action.

Critiques of Kohlberg's Work

One of the most influential critiques of Kohlberg's theory is found in Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982). Gilligan argued that Kohlberg's rule-orientated conception of morality has an orientation toward justice, which she associates with men and boys, whereas women and girls are more likely to approach moral dilemmas with a "care" orientation. Kohlberg used an all male sample on which to base his theory. Gilligan argued that his theory did not adequately represent the population because it did

not address the concerns and experiences of women. A consequence of this lack of attention to women resulted in women being considered as either "deviant or deficient in their development," (Gilligan, 1977, p.482).

Kolhberg's theory is centered around the principles of justice and fairness. However, Gilligan asserted that women possess a morality of responsibility and an "ethic of care" that deserves consideration. Gilligan's criticism led to the development of her own theory of moral development that takes the development of women's moral judgment into consideration. Through her research of college age women who were contemplating abortion, Gilligan derived a theory that centered around the concepts of "caring" and "sensitivity to others," (Gilligan, 1977). She asserted that the development of women's moral judgment appears to proceed from an initial concerns with survival, to a focus on goodness, and eventually leads to a principled understanding of nonviolence as the most adequate guide to the just resolution of moral conflicts (Gilligan, 1977). Gilligan concluded that while an "ethic of justice" in men proceeds from the premise of equality, an "ethic of care" in women is based on the premise of nonviolence (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan believes that this distinction is important because it provides a better understanding of the development of women.

Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, et al. (1999) also identified several problems with Kohlberg's model. First, they believed that moral judgment is only one psychological component of general moral development. Therefore to rely so heavily on moral judgment to measure moral development is inadequate.   Further they asserted that Kohlberg's emphasis on justice was not "comprehensive moral theory because it predominately deals with the morality of non-intimate relationships within society (the political side of morality rather

than the personal side)," (Rest et al., p. 57). They also believe that the dilemmas that

Kohlberg used in the Defining Issues test to measure moral judgment are inadequate

because Kohlberg's dilemmas "do not cover the whole domain of morality," (p. 57).

Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau et al. (1999) proposed that Kohlberg's model was useful but with

modifications. They called their approach Neo-Kohlbergian. This approach used the

concept of schemas, derived from Kohlberg's work, instead of stages. Schemas are

understood to be general knowledge structures residing in long term memory such as

expectations, hypotheses, and concepts. Schemas are formed as people notice similarities

and recurrences in their experiences. However, despite their critiques of Kohlberg's

work, they find that Kohlberg's theory is still the foundation of moral development

theory.

James Rest's Stages of Moral Judgment

James Rest, a student of Kohlberg's, adapted Kohlberg's stage theory to create a

theory of moral development which includes a six-stage model of moral judgment. Rest

(1979) acknowledged that much of his work was based on the work of Kohlberg.

However, Rest (1979a) disagreed with aspects of Kohlberg's model of development.

Specifically, he resisted Kohlberg's assertion that individual reasoning occurs one stage

at a time. Rest proposed that it is more appropriate to consider that an individual may

shift between stages depending on his/her experiences and the nature of the dilemma

he/she is facing.

Rest (1979) identified and developed six stages of moral judgment. Within each

stage a central concept is identified for determining rights and responsibilities, known as

morality. Stage 1, *Obedience*, is characterized by individuals who are told what to do and

to follow the rules or be punished. They do not make the rules and have no influence or comprehension as to the reason for the rules. At this stage "you do what you are told" (p. 24) characterizes the morality of the individual. At stage 2, *Instrumental Egoism and Simple Exchange*, people begin to realize that individuals have differences of opinions, therefore; the way to obtain something one desires is to negotiate with others. "Let's make a deal" (p. 26) characterizes the morality of this stage. At stage 3, *Interpersonal Concordance,* Rest characterizes morality as "be considerate, nice, kind, and you'll get along with others" (p. 27). The individual begins to build relationships and even friendships with others. There is an understanding that there is mutual benefit from a relationship versus the mere exchange with another. Stage 4, *Law and Duty to the Social Order,* is characterized by the belief that "everyone in society is obligated and protected by law" (p. 29).   There is an understanding that laws exist to protect society and should be obeyed. Stage 5, *Societal Consensus,* represents the first of two stages that Rest terms "principled moral thinking." There is an understanding at this stage that society has established laws through social cooperation and is characterized by "you are obligated by whatever arrangements are agreed to by due process procedures" (p. 32). Stage 6, *Non-arbitrary Social Cooperation,* creates the principles of an ideal social organization. The morality at this stage is "how rational and impartial people would organize cooperation" (p. 35). Social cooperation among individuals is paramount in this stage. This stage maintains that even if the majority of people in a society want a law, that does not make the law morally right. It is up to those in the society to cooperate so that each individual within a society can benefit equally by cooperating and by anticipating what principles a

rational society would want to end up with for governing its system of cooperation (Rest,

1979). Table 2.2 provides an overview of Rest's theory.

Table 2.2. Rest's (1979) Stages of Moral Judgment

Stage	Description
Obedience	Characterized by individuals who are told what to do and to follow the rules or be punished.
Instrumental Egoism and Simple Exchange	People begin to realize that individuals have differences of opinions, therefore the way to obtain something one desires is to negotiate with others.
Interpersonal Concordance	There is an understanding that there is mutual benefit from a relationship versus the mere exchange with another.
Law and Duty to the Social Order	There is an understanding that laws exist to protect society and should be obeyed.
Societal Consensus (represents a "principled moral thinking" stage)	There is an understanding that society gas established laws through social cooperation .
Non-arbitrary Social Cooperation (represents a "principled moral thinking" stage)	This stage maintains that even if the majority of people in a society want a law, that does not make the law morally right. Social Cooperation is key in this stage.

In addition to the stages of moral judgment, Rest argued that moral development

or moral behavior is not the result of a single process. Rest believed that in order for

moral behavior to occur, four major psychological processes must occur. He referred to

this as the "Four-Component Model" (Rest, 1986, p. 3).

James Rest's Four Component Model of Morality

Rest (1986) proposed a Four Component Model of Morality including moral

sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral character and believed that,

although each of these may interact and influence other components, all four have a

"distinctive function" (p. 4). Rest posited that these four distinct psychological processes

need to occur for an individual to behave morally. Rest believed that Kohlberg's model was limited because it focused on only one component, specifically, moral reasoning.

Moral sensitivity is the first component in Rest's (1986) Model. The key element to this component is that an individual must be able to interpret a situation as having more than one course of action. The individual must be able to consider how each course of action would impact the parties involved. *Moral judgment* is the second component. This component of morality involves deciding which course of action is right, just or fair. After determining which course of action is the morally right one, the individual must commit to an action. The third component, *moral motivation*, involves the commitment that an individual makes toward the moral course of action. The moral motivation component occurs when the individual places greater priority or emphasis on moral values over other values that may conflict with the moral value. The fourth and final component is *moral action*, also known as moral character. It entails having the courage and integrity to act upon the determined moral action (Rest, 1986).

According to Rest's model, all four components are essential in order for an individual to behave morally. However, moral judgment, the second component is the one that is central to this study because it focuses on an individual deciding what is right, just and fair. It is also possible to measure moral judgment using Rest's Defining Issues Test. Therefore, from a practical perspective, moral judgment was chosen as the component of interest in order to explore the relationship between moral development and honor codes.

Moral Judgment

College attendance has a positive effect on moral development (King & Mayhew, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). In fact, researchers suggest that the number of years of formal education is the most powerful predictor of moral reasoning development (Rest, 1984, 1986; Rest, Narvarez, Bebeau & Thoma, 1999). Researchers have concluded that formal education makes a unique contribution to moral reasoning development. Specifically, college students are more likely than non-students to use postconventional moral reasoning (King & Mayhew p. 250). Rest (1984) concluded that intellectual and educational experiences, such as those that occur in college, are the reasons for this difference.

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between moral judgment development and college students more closely (King & Mayhew, 2002) including several studies that have investigated the relationship between moral judgment and moral behavior in college students (Cummings, Dyas & Maddux, 2001; Leming, 1978; Malinowski & Smith, 1985; Nuss, 1982). An examination of self-reported propensity to engage in academic misconduct among teacher education students enrolled in an educational technology course revealed that students with a higher principled moral reasoning score reported that they engaged in less academically dishonest behaviors than those with lower scores (Cummings, Dyas & Maddux, 2001). Malinowski and Smith (1985) examined the relationship between moral judgment and cheating. In a sample of 53 male college students, they found that students with higher principled moral reasoning scores cheated less than students with lower scores. Nuss (1981), in a study of 146 college students at a large public university, examined the relationship between college

students' stage of moral reasoning and their participation in forms of academic dishonesty. She also examined the relationship between college students' stages of moral development and their attitudes toward the seriousness of forms of academic dishonesty. She found that students at higher stages of moral development considered forms of academic dishonesty to be more serious than did students at lower stages; and students who considered those behaviors to be more serious were less likely to participate in academic dishonesty.

In a study examining the relationship between moral development and cheating, Leming (1978) found that students in higher stages of moral development tended to cheat less than students at lower stages of moral development. He administered the Defining Issues Test to assess moral development and then presented subjects with a task where he modified the level of incentive to cheat and the level of supervision. Students were broken up into two groups. In the morning section students were given a stern warning regarding cheating and four faculty members closely monitored the subjects' behavior. Leming defined this situation as high threat-high supervision (Leming). In the afternoon section there was one faculty member present, no warnings were given, and the faculty member read a magazine during the test. Leming defined this as low threat-low supervision (Leming). He found that in low risk, low supervision environments, students at higher levels of moral development were just as likely to cheat as those at lower levels of moral development.

From these studies we can conclude that cheating is a complex behavior which may be impacted by one's level of moral development and one's level of moral reasoning. Although, some studies have shown that students at higher stages of moral

reasoning cheat less than students at lower stages, Leming's (1978) research

demonstrates that other factors such as the environmental structure can also influence

decision making.

<center>Measurement of Moral Judgment</center>

A review of the literature on moral judgment reveals that there are two primary

instruments that have been used to assess moral judgment; the Moral Judgment Interview

(Colby, Kohlberg, Speicher, Hewer, Candee, Gibbs, & Power, 1987) and the Defining

Issues Test (Rest, 1986a). The Moral Judgment Interview (MJI) is a tool which uses

hypothetical moral dilemmas to assess moral judgment. The MJI consists of a 45-minute

interview in which subjects are asked to resolve a series of three moral dilemmas. Each

dilemma is followed by a set of open-ended questions designed to enable the subject to

reveal the reasoning behind the logic of his or her responses. After scoring the responses,

an overall score is generated, which is a continuous measure of moral maturity. A second

score reflects the subject's stage of moral reasoning as defined by Kohlberg's Theory of

Moral Development.

Rest (1986a) had concerns about the interview approach to assess moral

development and consequently developed the Defining Issues Test (DIT), a quantitative

instrument which results in a "P-score". The P-score (range 0-95) is a measure of the

relative importance subjects assign to items on the instrument that are considered

"principled reasoning," as defined by Kohlberg's stages 5 and 6. The DIT is the most

widely used measure of moral reasoning (Rest, 1993). The DIT is a paper and pencil test

based on Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development. It consists of six moral dilemmas,

each of which describes a situation requiring an ethical decision. Associated with each

<center>36</center>

dilemma are twelve statements, which represent a particular stage or type of moral judgment. Participants are asked to rate each statement according to a scale ranging from great importance to no importance. After rating each item, the participants select the four most important of the twelve issues and rank them in the order of importance. The four issues selected are used to generate eight scores related to the stages of moral development (http://www.centerforthestudyofethicaldevelopment.net, retrieved November 9, 2005)

More recently, Rest and his colleagues developed a new version of the DIT, the DIT2 (Rest, Narvez, Thoma & Bebeau, 1999). The DIT2 is an updated, shorter version of the original DIT. The DIT2 consists of five dilemmas (each followed by 12 issue-statements); the original version of the DIT consists of six dilemmas. The five dilemmas of the DIT2 include: (a) a father contemplates stealing food for his starving family from the warehouse of a rich man hoarding food; (b) a newspaper reporter must decide whether to report a damaging story about a political candidate; (c) a school board chair must decide whether to hold a contentious and dangerous open meeting; (d) a doctor must decide whether to give an overdose of pain-killer to a suffering but frail patient; and (e) college students demonstrate against U.S. foreign policy.

In summary, a large body of research has been devoted to the area of moral development, and particularly the moral development of college students. King and Mayhew (2002) reviewed 172 studies that used the Defining Issues Test to investigate the moral development of undergraduate college students. Many of the studies reviewed by King and Mayhew examined how collegiate characteristics and educational experiences have contributed to changes in moral judgment. Findings in some of the studies

suggested that various factors such as social, cultural and intellectual experiences promote moral growth. Formal instruction, reading, exposure to diversity, interpersonal relationship, and living away from home have all been cited as facts that influence moral development in college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Responsibilities such as a job, a relationship with a significant other, and managing financial responsibilities have also been identified as factors associated with college attendance that increase moral development (Pascarella & Terenzini). According to Rest (1988), gains in moral development are associated with attaining a generalized understanding of the social world and an increase in intellectual stimulation that the college environment provides. Student responses have also indicated that intellectual interactions with roommates, courses that present difference and challenging perspectives and well as exposure to older students who exhibit moral advanced moral reasoning development have also been identified by students as factors that have contributed to their own moral development (Pacarella & Terenzini, 1991). In other studies, the specific factors that directly effect moral growth are unclear (King & Mayhew, 2002). However, based on their review King and Mayhew concluded that "dramatic gains in moral judgment are associated with collegiate participation" (p. 264). Future research is needed to examine the specific ways in which the college experience contributes to moral development.

This section of the literature discussed the foundations of moral development theory as well as the key theorists who have contributed largely to the understanding of moral development and moral reasoning. Kohlberg's (1981) six-stage theory has received the most attention in the literature (Rest, 1994) and provided the foundation for James Rest's (1979, 1986) research on moral development and on the development of the

DIT. Furthermore, a review of the literature shows that the Defining Issues Test (DIT) has been used in numerous studies to measure moral judgment and especially to measure the moral judgment of college students (Rest, 1993; King & Mayhew, 2002). This instrument has proven to be an effective and widely used measure of moral judgment, and as a result, was selected to be used as the primary instrument in this study examining how undergraduate students' moral reasoning relates to their understanding of an honor code.

Academic Integrity

Numerous studies have been conducted that explore the pervasiveness of cheating, the types of behaviors in which students engage, the reasons why students commit academic dishonesty, and the personal and situational factors that contribute to academic dishonesty. Additional research has explored the use of honor codes as a means of deterring academic dishonesty among students.

Prevalence

It is estimated that up to 95% of the undergraduates in the United States may have participated in some form of academic dishonesty at least once (McCabe & Trevino, 1997; Tittle & Rowe, 1973). Other studies report lower, yet no less disturbing, rates of academic dishonesty. In the 1960s, Bowers (1964) found that as many as 75% of over 5,000 students had engaged in at least one act of academic dishonesty during their college years. Comparable numbers have been found in other studies that have subsequently examined the prevalence of student behavior. In a study of over 6,000 students from 31 campuses throughout the United States, McCabe (1992) found that 64.7% of college students admitted committing academic dishonesty.

Diekhoff, Labeff, Clark, Williams, Francis and Haines (1986, 1996) examined cheating behaviors in two quantitative studies, conducted 10 years apart. Students enrolled in courses classified as part of the university's core curriculum were surveyed. Women, freshmen, and sophomores were overrepresented in the sample (Labeff et al., 1990). Results showed that more students (61.2%) reported cheating in 1994, than in 1984 (54.1%). In their original study, the researchers surveyed 380 students at a small state university in the southwestern United States with an enrollment of approximately 4,900 students. The institution had grown in size to 5,700 students by the time of their follow-up study in 1994, in which 474 students participated in the survey. Although the exact reasons for the increase are unknown, the researchers found that a statistically significant number of students reported an increase in cheating on smaller assignments such as quizzes and classroom assignments from 1984 to 1994 (Diekhoff et al., 1996).

The majority of the studies that have examined academic dishonesty have been conducted at large universities, which are more likely to provide a large sample size. However, similar studies have been conducted at small liberal arts schools, private schools and religiously affiliated schools. The rates of cheating ranged from a low of 9% in a sample of women at a small, liberal arts college to a high of 64% of the male students at a small regional university (Davis, Grover, Becker, & McGregor, 1992). In a study of 200 students at a small state college, Baird (1980) found that 75% of students surveyed reported cheating in college.

In a study designed to examine student and faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty at small colleges Graham, Monday, Obrien and Steffen (1994), found that close to 90% of all of the students surveyed admitted to engaging in behaviors that

constitute academic dishonesty. Four hundred and eighty students were sampled from two colleges including a small private college and a community college. Forty-eight faculty members also responded to a faculty survey. Results showed that students engaged in many behaviors that are considered academically dishonest including allowing another student to copy their homework and turning in a paper for credit in more than one class. Researchers concluded that since close to 90% of all of the students surveyed admitted they had engaged in some for of academic dishonesty, cheating appears to be as much of a problem on small campuses as it does on large campuses.

In their study of 2153 undergraduates enrolled in upperdivision courses at 71 private and public colleges in 11 different states, Davis and Ludvigson (1995) found that between 42% and 64% of students reporting cheating in college. Jendrik (1992) reported that the likelihood that students said they had observed cheating increased with the length of time they attended college. In other words, seniors observed more cheating than freshmen.

There is variation in the levels of cheating that have been reported in various studies. The reasons for the discrepancies from study to study are largely unknown. However, the types of questions students are asked, the way students define academic dishonesty, and their willingness to be truthful about their behaviors may be possible explanations for these discrepancies. This variation has caused concern among some researchers and has led others to conclude that the cheating rate has been increasing among college students, but there was little evidence to support this conclusion in the literature (Brown & Emmett, 2001; Spiller & Crown, 1995). Despite a lack of evidence that the prevalence of academic dishonesty has increased in recent years, the rates of

academic dishonesty remain high and indicate the severity of the problem in higher education.

Numerous studies have examined academic dishonesty among college students over the past several decades. Although the exact proportion of students who admit to academic dishonesty has varied from study to study, most findings suggest that the rate of academic dishonesty is high and it persists as a problem in higher education. A best estimate is that between 60 and 70 percent of college students admit to engaging in academic dishonesty (http://academicintegrity.org/cai_research.asp, retrieved December 19, 2005). As a means to deter such high rates of academic dishonesty, some institutions have adopted honor codes.

Prevalence Among Schools with an Honor Code

Bok (1990) suggested that an honor code may be the most effective approach to deter academic dishonesty. He also argued that if students are opposed to adopting an honor code then it is "worth considering whether some equivalent can be found that will do as much to provide serious thought about issues of moral responsibility" (p. 87).

An honor code is a set of goals and expectations for upholding academic integrity at an institution. According to McCabe and Pavela (2000) an honor code typically includes at least two of the following elements: (1) the use of a written pledge; (2) students comprise the majority of the judiciary that hears alleged violations of academic dishonesty; (3) unproctored examinations; and (4) student reporting requirements. Honor codes first appeared in early American colleges. William & Mary's honor code was evident by the late 1700s (www.wm.edu/so/honor-council/honorcode.htm, retrieved December 2, 2005). The University of Virginia adopted an Honor system over 150 years

ago that still exists today (www.virginia.edu/honor, retrieved December 2, 2005).

However, it wasn't until the early 1900's that research on honor codes in higher

education was conducted. According to the Center for Academic Integrity

(http://www.academicintegrity.org/samphonorcodes.asp, retrieved December 2, 2005)

over 100 institutions of higher education employ some kind of honor code.

In comparing academic dishonesty in colleges that have honor codes with those

that do not, McCabe and Trevino (1993) found significantly less cheating among students

enrolled in honor code institutions. They found academic dishonesty was significantly

correlated with several factors including student's understanding and acceptance of

academic integrity policies. Students who understood and accepted the university's

policies cheated less. Furthermore, if students perceived it was likely they would be

reported, they were less likely to engage in academic dishonesty. McCabe and Trevino

hypothesized that academic dishonesty would be inversely related to how certain students

were that they would be reported by a peer. They found that students who perceived they

would be reported, cheated less than students who perceived they would not be reported.

McCabe and Trevino also found that academic dishonesty was inversely related to how

severe students thought the penalties were. In other words, students who perceived the

penalties to be severe cheated less. Finally, data showed that academic dishonesty is

positively related to perceptions of peers' behavior. If students perceived that cheating

was common among their peers, they were more likely to cheat. Researchers concluded

that the strong influence of peers' behavior may suggest that "peers' behavior provides a

kind of normative support for cheating behavior" (p. 533).

McCabe et al. (2002) found that students at modified honor code institutions reported less academic dishonesty than students at institutions with no codes. A modified honor code typically incorporates a number of policies and procedures resembling traditional honor codes. Modified codes often lack the single sanction requirement of a strict honor code and may not have a mandatory peer reporting requirement, but they do set clear expectations for students and give them primary responsibility for upholding academic integrity policies and standards on campus.

In affiliation with the Center for Academic Integrity, McCabe and Trevino (2002) conducted a study of 2,200 students at 21 institutions. They found that the prevalence of academic dishonesty differed depending on the honor code status of the institution. When comparing institutions with a traditional honor code, a modified honor code and institutions with no honor code, they found students at institutions with traditional honor codes reported the lowest incidences of cheating, while students at institutions without an honor code reported the highest incidences of cheating. Students at modified code institutions, such as the University of Maryland, reported less cheating than students at schools with no codes, but more cheating than students at schools with traditional honor codes.

Hall and Kuh (1998) examined the impact of an honor code on perceptions of cheating at three universities. Of particular interest was whether an honor code positively influenced the academic integrity of students. Their results showed that the existence of an honor code alone did not deter student academic dishonesty. Even if students understood what constituted academic dishonesty, many of them cheated anyway. Since most of the students admitted to cheating on homework assignments and reported they

observed peers cheating, Hall and Kuh concluded that students need to understand the honor code, and the values associated with the honor code, before it can influence their behavior.

An honor code may be required at the institutional level or may be implemented by a faculty member in a classroom. Setting clear expectations and specific definitions of academic dishonesty, as well as consequences of misconduct, may help to faculty members to reduce academic dishonesty in their classroom. In one study, the impact of a classroom honor code on academic dishonesty was explored. In a study of 89 students enrolled in one of four undergraduate algebra courses at a small, private university without an institution-wide honor code, researchers found that the use of an honor code increased perceptions of the risk of cheating (Cummings & Romano, 2002). They found that in some situations the risk of getting caught may have acted as a deterrent for some students. The researchers suggested that honor codes may dissuade some students from engaging in dishonest behaviors, especially students who that perceive the risk of cheating is high, but may not discourage students with a propensity to engage in dishonest behaviors because an honor code is unlikely to change their behavior.

Proponents of honor codes argue that they are critical and effective tools that are necessary to change student behavior. "Honor codes may represent the most important contextual factor [related to academic dishonesty] because they offer faculty and administrators a means to influence behaviors across the entire student body" (McCabe et al., 2000, p. 211). In their qualitative study, the authors examined comments offered by students at institutions with an honor code and institutions without an honor code. They concluded that students on honor code campuses took their responsibility to uphold the

code very seriously. This responsibility helped students make favorable decisions

regarding academic integrity despite the pressures they face as college students.

In a study of 177 students at a university with an honor code, May and Loyd

(1993) found that only 23% of students reported cheating. No direct relationship between

students' attitudes toward the honor system and the incidence of cheating was found.

However, researchers did find that students with a higher sense of "personal honor" had a

more favorable view of the honor system and engaged in less cheating. The researchers

assessed students' personal codes of honor by using a series of statements which students

were asked to respond to such as "I feel the honor system is fair to me" and "I might

violate the honor system on small things like homework"(May & Loyd, p. 126). There

were eight items on the survey instrument to which students were asked to respond.

Responses were recoded so that scores on this particular portion of the instrument ranged

from eight to 32, with a higher score representing more positive attitudes and opinions.

May and Loyd concluded that the honor code itself means little unless students are able

to internalize the values that are espoused in an honor system (May & Loyd, 1993).

McCabe et al. (2001) found that peers were more willing to report incidences of

cheating at honor code schools (43.4%) than at non-honor code (13.8%) schools.

However, it appears that the higher rates of reporting at honor code institutions had little

impact on the lower levels of cheating that are typically found at such schools. McCabe

and Trevino suggested that this is because students at code institutions tend to accept

more responsibility for issues of academic integrity on their campus than students at

schools without an honor code. However, many students are still conflicted about

whether or not to actually report a violation since it is often difficult for students to report friends or report an incident if they are not certain the student was actually cheating.

Even though students may be less likely to cheat at honor code institutions, incidences of academic dishonesty still occur. Michaels and Miethe (1989) reported that 85.7% of their sample of 623 undergraduate students at a large state university had cheated on exams, papers or homework assignments. The study was conducted at a university where all students were required to sign an honor pledge upon entering the institution. Frequent reminders about the consequences of academic dishonesty, as well as control measures such as plaques in classrooms and statements on course syllabi, were adopted to deter dishonesty and reinforce a culture of honesty. These findings suggest that cheating is a normative behavior adopted and tolerated by students despite the presence of an honor code.

The existence of an honor code may be more of a deterrent to some students than it is for others. In a study of 532 undergraduate students at a private mid-sized university, researchers found that female students perceive academic integrity policies as a stronger deterrent to cheating than male students (Hendershott, Drinan, & Cross, 1999). Differences were also found between males and females in their motivations to act honestly. For example, female students were more concerned about the chance that they would get caught than were male students.   Female students also indicated that their personal beliefs about academic integrity were more important in their decisions to uphold academic integrity than male students.

Most research shows that honor codes can be effective in deterring academic dishonesty (McCabe & Trevino, 1993; May & Loyd, 1993; McCabe et al., 2002).

However, studies also show that an honor code is not the only deterrent (Hall & Kuh, 1998; Hendershott et al., 1999; Michael & Miethe, 1989). The risk of being caught, students understanding of the policies, and peer behavior are factors that contribute to academic dishonesty among students.

Defining Academic Dishonesty

Defining academic dishonesty is an arduous task. It is well-documented in the literature that people define academic dishonesty differently because individuals differ in their opinions about what specific behaviors constitute academic dishonesty (Barnett & Dalton, 1981; Higbee & Thomas, 2002; Nuss, 1984; Stern & Havlicek, 1986; Wright & Kelly, 1974). Barnett & Dalton (1981) stated that the term cheating is widely used to define other forms of academic dishonesty such as plagiarism or fabrication. The use of the term cheating to define all forms of academic dishonesty may pose problems because if both faculty and students do not agree on which behaviors constitute academic dishonesty, it is likely that students will continue to engage in behaviors that other members of the community consider inappropriate (Barnett & Dalton, 1981).

Higbee and Thomas (2002) assessed whether faculty and students considered specific behaviors, such as collaborating on homework and turning in the same paper for credit twice, as cheating. In their study of 251 faculty members and 227 students at a large public research university, results showed that faculty and students disagree about what behaviors constitute academic dishonesty. As a result significant confusion existed regarding what behaviors are considered acceptable. Higbee and Thomas believe that the discrepancy in the definition of academic dishonesty between students and faculty members exists because behavior that may be acceptable in one class, may be

unacceptable in another. For example, if it is acceptable to work together on homework in one class but is considered cheating in another, students may be confused about how to complete homework.   Higbee and Thomas suggest that it is important for faculty members to engage students in conversations about acceptable behaviors and practices in each classroom and to inform students of the institutions policies and procedures regarding academic integrity.

The definition of academic dishonesty can also vary among countries, which creates problems when trying to define academic dishonesty (Brilliant, 1996). For example, the lack of a commonly accepted definition poses problems for students who want to do the right thing and for faculty and administrators who want to hold cheaters accountable for their actions. Discussions between counselors and students at a community college revealed some students were surprised that both the cheater and the facilitator of academic dishonesty would be disciplined for their behavior. They also found that many students found it surprising that instructors were concerned about cheating, whereas in some countries cheating was "tacitly encouraged by teachers" (p. 591) because teachers are evaluated based on student performance. This difference may create confusion for international students studying in the United States and may contribute to behavior that is considered academic dishonesty in the United States, even if the behavior is not a violation in their home country (Brillant, 1996).

A review of this part of the literature shows that students define academic dishonesty differently from one another and from faculty. These differences in definitions may make it more difficult to deter behavior that faculty and administrators

consider dishonesty. However, students engage in academic dishonesty for a variety of other reasons as well.

Reasons Why Students Engage in Academic Dishonesty

Considerable research has been devoted to understanding the reasons why students engage in academic dishonesty and in understanding the reasons they offer to explain their behavior. Barnett and Dalton (1981) identified six factors that contribute to student academic dishonesty including stress, environment, intelligence, personality characteristics, moral reasoning and will.

Some students indicate that they think that cheating is acceptable because they perceive that cheating is common among their peers. In their study of 380 university students at a small state university, Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff and Clark (1986) explored factors underlying cheating behavior. One student reported that "[t]hose around me are cheating; therefore, it is fair for me to cheat in order to compete effectively" (p. 351). This attitude was one of three factors they identified as underlying cheating behavior. The researchers defined this attitude as a "neutralizing attitude" which they defined neutralization based on the work of Sykes and Matza (1957). "Neutralizing" means that students justified their cheating behavior by blaming others, thereby removing themselves from blame. The researchers also found that student immaturity is a factor underlying cheating. Specifically, younger, single students, who are often unemployed or employed part-time, tend to cheat more than older more mature students. Finally, students who were financially dependent on their parents and lacked financial investment in their education tended to cheat more than those who contributed to their own education.

Factors such as age, sex, religious affiliation, sorority or fraternity membership, and participation on athletic teams have frequently been identified as factors that help to determine whether it is likely that a student will commit academic dishonesty. Older students, women, and students wither higher grade point averages report less academic dishonesty while students in a sorority or a fraternity and where peer disapproval of cheating is low cheat more (McCabe & Trevino, 1997). Factors such as student values, institutional values, and the presence of honor codes are also factors that are related to academic dishonesty. However, many situational factors have also been cited as having influences on student behavior. Factors including stress, family pressures and expectations, balancing a heavy course-load with employment, and the necessity for future advancement (such as graduate schools, employment) are frequently identified by students as influencing their behavior to cheat (McCabe, 1999; Hall & Kuh, 1998).

Research on academic dishonesty has not been conducted only at institutions in the United States. Genereux and McLeod (1995) administered a questionnaire to 365 students at an urban community college in Canada. A three-part questionnaire was administered to volunteer participants. In part one, respondents were asked to rate factors that they believed would influence their decision to cheat on exam for which they were unprepared. Part two of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate whether or not they had engaged in 12 types of academically dishonest behaviors. Finally, respondents were asked to examine peer behavior and estimate the percentage of college students they believed cheated regularly and the percentage cheated occasionally. Instructor vigilance, perceived fairness of examinations, instructors' attitudes toward cheating, dependency on

financial support, and effect of the course on long-term goals were factors that most significantly influenced student cheating (Genereux & McLeod, 1995).

Baird (1980) found that competition among students, insufficient study time, and large workloads were frequently cited by students as reasons why they committed academic dishonesty. Students have frequently reported that pressures such as graduate school requirements, competition for grades, heavy workload, and insufficient time to study contribute to their dishonest behavior (Cizek, 1999; Drake, 1941; Smith, Ryan & Diggins, 1972).

A review of this area of the research shows that students cheat for a variety of reasons such as stress and heavy workloads (Baird, 1980) and they tend to justify or rationalize their cheating in a variety of ways in order to deflect the responsibility to someone or something else. To cope with their misconduct, students adopt numerous strategies to justify committing academic dishonesty. Students also deny responsibility in order to cope with their behavior. According to Labeff, Clark, Haines, & Diekhoff, (1990), denial of responsibility involves attributing their behavior to outside forces or forces beyond their control. Other students justify cheating because they observe cheating among other students (Haines et al, 1986; McCabe, 1992).

Attitudes Toward Academic Dishonesty

In nearly every study involving both, students and faculty, faculty view cheating as a significantly more severe offense than students (Graham, Monday, O'Brien & Steffen, 1994). In their study of 480 students from two colleges in the Midwest, the researchers found that students' attitudes toward cheating were a strong predictor of cheating behavior. Attitudes were measured based on how severe students rating specific

cheating behaviors Students with lenient attitudes (those who rated the less severe) were typically younger and were less religious than students with stricter attitudes. Students with lenient attitudes believed that a large number of other students cheat and that cheating was not a serious offense.

The findings of Graham et al. (1994), are supported by a 2004 study involving 853 students from across the United States. In a study of 799 college students from across the United States Bolin (2004) examined the influence of student attitudes on behavior and found that student attitudes play a critical role in the explanation of academic dishonesty. Attitudes were measured using a likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Students were asked to respond to four items including "it is "wrong to cheat" and "students should go ahead and cheat if they know they can get away with it." Results showed that students who held lenient attitudes toward cheating believe that other students cheated more frequently and were more likely to engage in cheating themselves.

In one study of 532 undergraduate students at a mid-sized private university, significant gender differences were found in students' motivations to act honestly (Hendershot, Drinan & Cross, 1999). Female students were more likely to act honestly out of respect for others. Female students were also more likely to be deterred from committing academic dishonesty because of sanctions that were in place. According to the researchers, differences in attitudes between male and female students toward academic dishonesty demonstrate the need for institutions to adopt policies and practices that address gender differences (Hendershot, Drinan & Cross, 1999). For example strict sanctions for committing academic dishonesty may deter female students but may not be

much a deterrent for male students. Since female students perceive academic integrity

policies as being a much stronger deterrent on their behavior than male students, an honor

code may be perceived much differently by female students than by male students.

Despite the fact that academic dishonesty is frequently observed by other

students, few students report their observations to the instructor or the proper authorities

(Jendrik, 1982; McCabe et al., 2001). In one study only 1% of students reported an

incident of academic dishonesty even though university policy required them to do so

(Jendrik, 1992). When asked about their lack of response, students reported various

reasons such as "it's the student's problem, not mine"; "it's the professors problem, not

mine; and "I don't tattle and I don't get involved" (Jendrik, p.264). This attitude is often

incongruent with university policy, which typically requires peer reporting. Based on

student attitudes' Jendrik concluded that an honor code that requires students to report

instances of academic dishonesty is unlikely to be effective. Jendrik offers two possible

reasons why students did not follow university policy. First, as suggested by her

research, students may be indifferent to cheating behavior and to the students that commit

academic dishonesty. Jendrik also suggested that students may not understand the

process for reporting instances of academic dishonesty or the consequences of failing to

adhere to policy. In a previous study, Jendrik (1989) found that faculty members did not

fully understand the academic integrity policies. Therefore, it is likely that students also

do not fully understand academic integrity policies since often times students learn about

academic integrity policies from their faculty members.

Peer behavior often affects students' attitudes and behaviors. In a study of 175

students at a small, private liberal arts college with an honor code, Jordan (2001) found

that cheating behavior was significantly related to perceptions of the behavior of peers and to attitudes about cheating. Specifically, students who engaged in cheating believed that other students were engaging in similar behaviors more often than they actually were. Perceived social norms were equally as important as actual peer attitudes and behaviors.

Baird (1980) found that although 57% of students reported that they did not approve of cheating, 40% reported that they did not disapprove of cheating. Seventy-five percent of students in his study indicated that cheating was "a normal part of life" (p. 517), despite the fact that many students felt it was morally wrong to do so. Baird's results show that many students do not perceive cheating as wrong and simply accept cheating as a part of their experience in college.

<center>Academic Dishonesty and Moral Judgment</center>

A few studies have examined the relationship between student moral development and student cheating behavior. Schwartz, Feldman, Brown, and Heingarter (1969) conducted a study rating subjects on Kohlberg's stages using moral dilemmas. The researchers then gave the subjects an opportunity to cheat. Schwartz et al. found that 53% of the freshman males rated at levels 2 and 4 cheated, but only 17% of those rated at level 5 or above cheated. While this finding suggests that students at higher levels of moral reasoning cheat less, other studies have found there is not a relationship between academic dishonesty and moral reasoning (Leming, 1978; Nuss, 1981; Smith, Ryan & Diggins, 1972). The reason for this discrepancy is unknown but previous research on moral development indicates that while moral reasoning is a good predictor of moral action, moral reasoning cannot predict moral action (Rest, 1979). According to Rest

(1986a) moral reasoning is an important factor in decision making but other factors such as moral sensitivity, moral motivation, and moral action must also be present for an individual to behave morally.

In a study exploring the relationship between moral development and cheating, Leming (1978) used the Defining Issues Test to assess subjects' stage of moral development and presented subjects with a task where they had a low risk of being caught and a task where there was a high risk of detection. Leming examined the behavior of the subjects in the context of the students' stages of moral reasoning. The results of this study showed that students in both high and low levels of moral development showed similar behaviors across conditions. Specifically students at high levels of moral development were just as likely to cheat as students in lower stages of moral development in low risk, low supervision situations.

Smith, Ryan, and Diggins (1972) in a study of 112 undergraduates at two institutions examined determinants of cheating on college exams. The researchers hypothesized that indices of conscience (moral standards, guilt, and potential loss of self-esteem) would be negatively related to frequency of cheating. A questionnaire on cheating was administered to students and an index of the frequency of cheating was obtained by asking subjects to write the number of courses taken in the preceding semester and to recall in how many courses they had cheated on an examination. Two specific items dealt with preventing cheating; "my personal moral code," and "cheating would make me think less of myself." Smith et., al. found that for both men and women, the more influential a student rated "moral code" or "potential loss of self-esteem," as factors that prevented cheating, the lower those students reported frequency of cheating.

McCabe and Trevino (1993) suggested that creating an environment where academic dishonesty is socially unacceptable is necessary and challenging for institutions of higher education. Students must clearly understand the expectations placed on them regarding academic honesty and they also must perceive that their peers are adhering to these expectations. McCabe and Trevino recommend that institutions examine Kohlberg's suggestion that schools become "just communities." A just community is one in which "students have significant responsibility in the development of a social contract that defines the norms, values, and members' rights and responsibilities" (McCabe & Trevino, 1993, p. 534). The underlying assumption is that the institutional climate created in such communities will provide the conditions that are necessary for moral development and will lead to less academic dishonesty.

An in-depth literature review reveals little research that links academic dishonesty and moral development, or more specifically, moral judgment. However, the literature that does exist is inconclusive as to whether moral reasoning is related to academic dishonesty. No study was found that links moral judgment to students' understanding of an honor code.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

The literature on academic dishonesty is rich as it relates to the prevalence of academic dishonesty, which students cheat, how they cheat, why they cheat and under what conditions cheating is likely to occur. Studies found that institutions of higher education with honor codes experience less academic dishonesty than institutions without an honor code. However, other factors such as students' understanding of honor codes

also affect student behavior regarding academic dishonesty (May & Loyd, 1992; McCabe & Trevino, 1993).

A review of the literature also shows that students differ in their levels of moral judgment. These differences will likely impact individual experiences and decisions while attending college. As shown in this literature review, attending college does appear to have a positive influence on student moral development (King & Mayhew, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). However, it is unclear as to whether there is a relationship between moral development and academic integrity.

Therefore, in order to expand the literature on moral development and academic integrity, this study explored the relationship between students' moral reasoning and their understanding of the honor code at the University of Maryland. Building on prior research, this study utilized a mixed methods approach to examine if students' level of moral reasoning is related to how they interpret and make meaning of an honor code. The DIT2 was used as a measure of moral judgment and interviews were conducted with students to explore their understanding of the honor code. The following chapter explains the design and methodology of the study in greater detail.

CHAPTER III   METHODOLOGY

This study explored the relationship between students' moral reasoning and their understanding and interpretation of the honor code at the University of Maryland. In order to examine this relationship, this study posed the following research question:

How do undergraduate students' levels of moral reasoning relate to their understanding of an honor code?

This chapter includes a discussion of the methodology employed in the study, as well as the rationale for this choice. Data collection methods used to answer the research question and the data analysis procedures used to interpret the data are presented. Finally, the precautions that were taken to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of these data and subsequent findings as well as limitations of this study are discussed.

Overview of Methodology

This study employed a mixed method approach to answer the research question. A combined methods study employs multiple methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1994). This study involved mixed or "between methods" (Creswell, p. 174). Between methods involves drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures in one study. In this study, the Defining Issues Test, version two (DIT2) was administered to 400 undergraduate students at the University of Maryland. The DIT2 is an instrument used to measure moral judgment. Qualitative interviews with a sub-sample of the participants who completed the DIT2 explored how students understood and interpreted the honor code at the University.

Rationale for Choice

A mixed method approach to this study was selected due to the nature of the research question. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) linked the paradigm of pragmatism to mixed methods research. In their more recent publication, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) reported that several scholars have made a link between pragmatism and mixed methods and have proposed that pragmatism is the best paradigm for justifying mixed methods research. Significant parallels can be drawn to link a pragmatic approach to mixed methods research. In particular, one point drives the rationale for selecting a mixed methods design for the current study. Specifically, the research question drives the design of this study and the methods used for data collection. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) believed that "pragmatists consider the research question to be more important than either the method they use or the worldview that is supposed to underlie the method" (p. 21). A pragmatic epistemology was used to guide the research question in this study. The pragmatic orientation allowed the researcher to focus on the primary research questions. Specifically in this study, the researcher was interested in the relationship between moral reasoning and students' understanding of the honor code. In order to measure moral reasoning, a quantitative tool was used. In order to select a group of students at various levels of moral development, the Defining Issues Test, version two, was administered to assess students' level of moral reasoning. This helped to inform whether there was a relationship between students' level of moral judgment and students' understanding and interpretation of the honor code because it provided the researcher with a valid assessment of the participants' level of moral reasoning. The Defining Issues Test has been widely used to assess the level of moral judgment of college students (King &

Mayhew, 2002; Thoma, 1994) and was an appropriate assessment tool for the purposes of this study.

In order to obtain a rich understanding of how students understood and interpreted the honor code, qualitative interviews were conducted. Given the primary research question posed in this study, qualitative data techniques were also appropriate. In-depth, semi-structured interviews with some of the participants were conducted. The researcher was particularly interested in "meaning," that is, how did students at different levels of moral development make sense of and interpret the honor code at the University of Maryland. Creswell (1994) stated that when conducting qualitative research, the researcher is interested in process, meaning, and understanding gained through words. Qualitative research is descriptive because it provides thick, rich data. When conducting qualitative work it is acceptable to purposefully or intentionally select participants who will best answer the research question posed. In this study, qualitative interviews were conducted with a select group of students based on individual levels of moral reasoning.

In summary, a mixed methods approach to data collection was appropriate and necessary to gather data that allowed the researcher to address the research question. The quantitative data analysis provided a measure of moral judgment, which was then compared to the qualitative data informing how students' understood the honor code. The integration of the quantitative and qualitative data was done at the analysis phase, making this a sequential exploratory study (Jones, Torres, Arminio, 2006). The purpose of mixing the methods was to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem (Creswell, 2003). According to Thomas (2003), the best answers to research questions often result from using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Defining Issues Test

The Defining Issues Test (DIT) is one of the most widely used instruments for measuring moral judgment of college students (King & Mayhew, 2002; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 1991). A new version of the DIT (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma & Bebeau, 1999) was recently developed and was used in this study. The new version is shorter, has clearer instructions, and is slightly more powerful on validity criteria than the original version (http://www.centerforthestudyofethicaldevelopment.net, retrieved, November 16, 2005). It was also updated to remove outdated scenarios such as a scenario that described the Vietnam War and talked about it as if it were a current issue (Rest, Naravaez, Thoma & Bebeau, 1999). Furthermore the DIT2 removed language in one of the items that used the term "orientals" (p.647) when referring to Asian-Americans. The new version, known as the DIT2, consists of five scenarios, each of which is a moral dilemma (versus six in the original version), followed by 12 issue-statements. Participants were asked to evaluate each of the issue-statements and indicate the importance of the issue-statement in decision making regarding the dilemma (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The five dilemmas given in the DIT2 are: (a) a father contemplates stealing food for his starving family from the warehouse of a rich man hoarding food; (b) a newspaper reporter must decide whether to report a damaging story about a political candidate; (c) a school board chair must decide whether to hold a contentious and dangerous open meeting; (d) a doctor must decide whether to give an overdose of pain-killer to a suffering but frail patient; and (e) college students demonstrate against U.S. foreign policy (http://www.centerforthestudyofethicaldevelopment.net, retrieved October 5,

2005). The way in which a student responds to the moral dilemmas were used to obtain the scores and ultimately assess the students' level of reasoning. A sample of the DIT2 is included in Appendix A.

After rating the importance of the 12 items on a scale of 1 to 5, the participant was asked to consider all 12 items simultaneously. The participant was asked to rank the four most important of the 12 considerations in making a decision. The items are intended to reflect different stages of moral judgment. The way that a participant rated and ranked these items was used to derive a participant's score. The most used index of the DIT has been the "principled" (P) score. The P-score is a number that represents the weighted sum of ranks for the principled items (Kohlberg's stages 5 and 6) and ranges from 0 to 95 (Rest, 1994). This provides the level of principled moral reasoning of the respondent and is correlated with Kohlberg's stages (5 and 6) of moral development. The higher the P-score the more advanced the person is in moral reasoning. In other words, the P index is interpreted as the relative importance the participant places on principled moral considerations when making a decision (Rest, Thoma, Narvaez & Bebeau, 1997).

Validity and Reliability

According to the Center for the Study of Ethical Development (1994), the original DIT has been used in more than 1,000 studies and has included several hundred thousand subjects. Validity for the DIT has been assessed based on several criteria. For example, to establish criterion-group validity, mean scores for several groups were compared. P-scores of various groups were examined, ranging from junior-high students to graduate students. Rest (1994) reported junior-high school students had a mean score of 21.9 as compared with high school seniors with a score of 31.8. Adults in the general population

had a mean score of 40.0 as compared with college students who had a mean score of

42.3. The highest mean score was found in philosophy and political science graduate

students with a score of 65.2 (Rest, 1994). The largest proportion of variance in moral

reasoning scores has been attributed to age and education (Rest, 1986, 1993, 1994; Rest,

Naravez, Bebeau et al, 1999).

According to the Center for the Study of Ethical Development

(http://www.centerforthestudyofethicaldevelopment.net, retrieved, November 16, 2005) a

10-year longitudinal study showed significant gains in principled moral reasoning of both

men and women, and of college-attenders and non-college subjects. Furthermore, a

review of a dozen studies of freshman to senior college students shows effect sizes of

0.80 for principled moral reasoning. Specifically, students' level of principled moral

reasoning largely increased over time.

The DIT has been widely used to establish the relationship between the

development of moral reasoning and college attendance. King and Mayhew (2002)

reviewed 172 studies that used the DIT to investigate the moral development of

undergraduate college students. After controlling for age and entering level of moral

judgment, they determined that significant gains in moral judgment were associated with

college attendance.

The Center for Ethical Development reports the Cronbach alpha for the DIT is in

the upper .70s / low .80s. This reliability test measures the degree to which the items on

the DIT measure the same characteristic; the higher the number, the better the index of

reliability. In this case, the Cronbach Alpha demonstrates that the reliability of the DIT is

strong. The Center for the Study of Ethical Development also reports that when a DIT

test is repeated (test-retest) the results produce similar scores

(http://www.centerforthestudyofethicaldevelopment.net, retrieved November 16, 2005).

Scoring Indices

A new way of scoring the DIT has recently been developed. The new index (called New Index or "N") does not replace the "P" index, instead researchers are encouraged to analyze data using both the P and the N index. Both scores measure the relative importance subjects assign to items on the instrument that are considered "principled reasoning." The N index uses the same data (i.e., dilemmas, items, ratings and rankings) as used for the P index.   The P index is called the P-score and the N index is called the N2 score. The P-score is calculated based on how the participant ranks data for stages 5 and 6, but does not consider the impact of Kohlberg stages 2, 3, and 4. An N2 score is calculated by combining the P-score with the participant's rating score. The rating score is based on how the participant rates the data for items at the lower stages. The score is calculated by subtracting the average rating given to items at stages 2 and 3 (the lower stages) from the average rating given at stages 5 and 6 (Rest et al., 1997). This is called the "measure of discrimination" (Rest et al., 1997, p. 501).   The N2 score is then calculated for each participant by adding the P-score to the rating data (measure of discrimination) weighted by three. According to Rest et al, the discrimination component is weighted by three because it has about one-third the standard deviation of the P-score. Although both scores are generally used to assess moral judgment, the N2 is considered a stronger, more reliable index than the P-score alone because the N2 uses both rankings and rating, making it a more accurate measure of moral judgment (Rest et al., 1997). Both the P-score and the N2 were used to identify students to participate in individual

interviews. However, in this study, the P-score was the primary score used to place students in the subgroups and the N2 score was used to support the placements.

Site Selection

The University of Maryland was chosen as the site for this study for two primary reasons. First, the University of Maryland is a large state institution that adopted an honor code in 1991. The adoption of the code was, in part, a response to student leaders who had expressed interest in such a code because they were concerned with the amount of academic dishonesty observed on the campus. The University modeled the *Code of Academic Integrity* on the University of Virginia's honor code. The University of Virginia has a traditional honor code with a single sanction penalty of expulsion for students who are found responsible for violating the honor code. Administrators at the University of Maryland were reluctant to adopt such a strict penalty and determined that the single sanction of expulsion was "inconsistent" with the University's educational mission. As an educational institution, the administration believed that an educational sanction was more appropriate than permanently removing a student from the campus.

The University of Maryland developed the concept of a modified honor code when it adopted the *Code of Academic Integrity* (http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/history.html, retrieved, September 28, 2005). As a "modified code" institution, the University does not have a mandatory penalty for academic dishonesty and does not have unproctored examinations or mandatory reporting requirements, as typically required in traditional honor codes. However, as a modified code institution, the University focuses on communicating the value of academic integrity and allowing students to play a significant role in the judicial and hearing processes

related to cases of academic dishonesty (McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield, 2002). More recently, in 2001 the University Senate adopted and added a component of the *Code of Academic Integrity*; an honor pledge. The pledge was designed to enhance awareness among students and faculty that the University takes academic integrity seriously. The honor pledge states the following: "I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination or assignment".

Second, the site was accessible to the researcher. As both a graduate student and a full-time staff member at the University, it was easy and convenient to gain access to the participants in the study. According to Creswell (2003), it is important to purposefully select sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem being studied. The University of Maryland was both accessible to the researcher and helped to explore the relationship between students' moral reasoning and their understanding of the honor code.

Participants

Participants were undergraduate students who attend and reside on campus at the University of Maryland at College Park, a comprehensive research institution, with a modified honor code. Initial data was collected by the Department of Resident Life. Specifically, four hundred student participants were randomly selected from the approximately 10,000 students living in the residence halls to take the DIT2. Students living in the residence halls represent approximately one-third of the overall undergraduate population at the University. Students represented a variety of majors, year in school, backgrounds, racial and ethnic diversity, as well as age. Four hundred students were selected to take the DIT2 to produce a sample that yielded a range in

participants' P-scores (high, medium, and low). These categories were determined by the principle investigator after reviewing the P-scores and N2 scores of the participants as reported by the scoring service. The cost of administering the DIT2 was also taken into consideration when determining the sample size. The DIT2 is expensive to administer and score. Therefore, a sample size was selected based on cost, expected results and expected return rate. The average response rate obtained by the Department of Resident Life was approximately 90% on similar projects. The response rate for this project was 81%. The sample was selected to obtain a range of DIT2 scores in order to identify participants for the individual interviews.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

Data for this project came from the DIT2 and individual student interviews. The data collection process in this study was sequential because the qualitative sample was purposefully drawn from the larger sample of students who took the Defining Issues Test. The DIT2, a quantitative instrument was administered by the Department of Resident Life to obtain students' moral judgment scores. For the purposes of this study, fifteen semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with a sub-set of the sample representing each of the three levels of moral reasoning.

Defining Issues Test-Version 2

The DIT2 was administered in January 2006 by the Resident Assistant staff in the residence halls. The administration of the DIT2 was conducted in collaboration with the annual residence hall assessment project. A group of 400 students were selected randomly by the Director of Research and Assessment in the Department of Resident Life. The Resident Assistants were given a list of students who were selected to take the

DIT2. They hand delivered and collected the DIT2 at the same time the residence hall

assessment survey was delivered and collected. Students were asked to complete a

consent form (Appendix B) prior to completing the instrument. The consent form

explained to students that the purpose of the research project was to assess student

responses to social issues. The language in the consent form was consistent with the

language in the instructions on the DIT2 which state, "This questionnaire is concerned

with how you define the issues in a social problem" (DIT2 form). Students were given

approximately two weeks to complete the DIT2. As part of the process, students were

also asked to indicate whether or not they would be willing to be contacted for a follow-

up interview. A response rate of 81% was received.

After the DIT2 was collected it was sent to the Center for the Study of Ethical

Development at the University of Minnesota to be scored. Upon return and examination

of the DIT2 scores, the primary investigator examined the range of scores obtained in the

results of the DIT2. An appropriate distribution of scores was identified to categorize P-

scores into high, medium and low categories.

Students were then purposefully selected by the Director for Research and

Assessment, based on their scores and their willingness to participate in individual

interviews. A group of 15 students were selected to participate in order to gather a

diverse group of students with varying levels of moral judgment. Students were selected

based on the P-score and the N2-score, the primary measures of moral judgment.

Students selected to participate in the interviews had varying levels of moral judgment

but the specific level for each student was unknown to the primary researcher until after

the data were collected and analyzed to reduce the risk of bias on the part of the

researcher. Only students who had indicated a willingness to participate in an interview process were contacted for an interview. Students were first contacted in writing via email (Appendix C) and a follow-up phone call was then made to invite students to participate. The letter to students explained the link between the DIT2 as a measure of moral reasoning and the request for a follow-up interview. As an incentive, students who agreed to participate in an interview were given a $15.00 gift certificate to the University Book Center. Finally, students' names were also entered into a drawing for one student to be selected for a $100.00 gift certificate to the University Book Center.

The time frame for data collection was one semester. Data collection dates and times for the individual interviews were arranged individually with each participant.

Interviews

Interviewing is a common means for collecting data in qualitative research. According to Seidman (1998), the purpose of in-depth interviewing is "an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 3). Interviewing is an appropriate technique for collecting data when examining people's feelings or when examining how people interpret the world since this information is not easily observed. Interviewing is also the best technique when conducting intensive examinations of a few selected individuals, as is the case in this study (Merriam, 1998). Interviews are important to this study because student attitudes and perceptions cannot be easily observed and the purpose of this study was to understand how students understand the honor code at the University of Maryland.

Prior to conducting interviews for the study, a pilot interview was conducted with an undergraduate student at the University. The purpose of the pilot interview was to

assess the usefulness of the interview questions and to gauge the time necessary to complete the interviews. No changes were made to the interview questions as a result of the pilot interview. Following the pilot interview, one 45-60 minute semi-structured interview was conducted with each of the participants. Students were asked to complete a consent form (Appendix D) for the interview phases of the data collection process. The consent form explained that the purpose of the interview was to explore students' understanding of the honor code at the University so that students understood the nature of the questions they would be asked to respond to, prior to answering any questions. These sessions were used to gather data relevant to the research question, as well as contextual information. Although questions were prepared in advance of the interviews to provide guidance and direction to the interview, the investigations were more open-ended and less rigid than an "oral survey" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). The less structured format allowed the researcher to respond to emerging issues and required flexibility on the part of the researcher and participants. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), qualitative interviewing generally involves moving from broad to more specific questions. This technique was also employed to put the participants at ease and allow each to become familiar with the interviewer and the types of questions that were being asked.

A protocol for the interviews is included in Appendix E. These interview questions were guided both by the research question and by concepts from the theoretical framework of this study. Additional questions emerged from conversations with participants. Interviews were conducted in an interview room at the University career center in order to provide a convenient and neutral location for the participants. Immediately following each interview session, reflective notes were composed by the

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interviewer. With the permission of the participants, all interviews were digitally tape-recorded and transcribed. Additionally, the investigator took notes during each session to record non-verbal reactions, reflections, and data collection refinements and additions.

Given the potentially sensitive nature of the research project, it was necessary for the researcher to gain the informed consent and permission from all participants. A copy of the consent form is included in the Appendix B. Consent was obtained in writing by all participants when the DIT2 was administered as well as prior to each of the individual interviews.

Data analysis (DIT2)

Preliminary statistical analysis was conducted by the Center for the Study of Ethical Development through the scoring service. The scoring service calculated means and standard deviations for the sample as a whole, then, used the first digit of the ID number as a basis for creating subgroups and conducting t-test contrasts on all the subgroups. Subgroups were created using cutoff points recommended by Rest (1990). Specifically, Rest "assigned P-scores from 0 to 27 to the lowest third, from 28 to 41 to the middle third, and 42 and above to the highest third" (Turner et al., 2002, p. 307) in order to divide a sample into groups for comparison purposes. The P-scores to divide this sample were slightly different than the cutoff points recommended by Rest in order to obtain greater differences between the groups. Students who were at the extreme end of the range were selected because it was not known to the researcher whether or not students at varying levels of moral reasoning would understand the honor code differently. Therefore, in order to maximize the difference between the groups for comparison purposes, the ranges were slightly smaller than those recommended by Rest.

Students who scored between 4 and 20 were placed in the "low" subgroup. Students who scored between 34 and 38 were placed in the "medium" group and those who scored greater than 56 were placed in the "high" group.

In addition to the preliminary analysis by the scoring center at Center for the Study of Ethical Development, cross tabulations were conducted to determine the mean Pscores by gender and year in school in each of the five groups. In order to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the mean P-scores of men and women or in students based on year in school, oneway analysis of variances (ANOVAs) were conducted.

Data analysis (interviews)

"Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data," (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). Although no consensus exists among qualitative researchers as to the best way to analyze qualitative data, there are general strategies employed by most qualitative researchers (Creswell, 1994). First, data analysis occurs simultaneously with data collection, data interpretation and narrative report writing (Creswell, 1994). Second, data analysis is based on data reduction and interpretation (Creswell, 1994). Third, coding procedures are generally used to develop categories and themes that are then used to inform the narrative report (Creswell, 1994).

For the purposes of this study, several techniques were employed to analyze the data. Data analysis procedures for the interviews followed the steps outlined in Creswell (2003). Data from the individual interviews were first transcribed. The primary researcher read through all of the transcriptions and data to get a general sense of the

information and to reflect on its overall meaning. The primary researcher also listened to

the audio recording of all of the interviews and made brief notes based on the recordings.

Detailed analysis using a coding process was then conducted. The coding process

involved organizing the materials into themes and categories, then labeling the

categories. Three levels of coding were completed including Open Coding, Axial Coding

and Selective Coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open Coding involved coding by lines

in the interview transcripts and developing broad themes. Next, Axial Coding involved

exploring patterns between and among the themes. Finally, Selective Coding involved

refining and integrating concepts and developing themes in the data. The coding process

was used to generate a description of the individuals as well as the themes. Using the

descriptions and themes that were generated, short narratives were constructed to convey

the findings of the data analysis. The final step was to interpret or make meaning of the

data.

A draft of the final report was prepared by the primary researcher without

knowing the level of moral reasoning of the participants in order to analyze the

qualitative data as objectively as possible. Prior to writing the final report, the primary

researcher examined the DIT2 results of each of the 15 participants who were

individually interviewed. This step is where the data from both the quantitative and

qualitative portions of this study were integrated. Prior to this step, the primary

researcher was unaware of the level of moral reasoning of the participants. This

information was compared with the findings and interpretation of the individual

interviews to determine if a relationship exists between the student's level of moral

reasoning and his/her understanding of the honor code. The integration of the data

occurred to answer the primary research question of the study. The final report includes the findings of the study, presented in narrative format.

Trustworthiness

As researchers, we have ethical obligations to minimize misrepresentations and misunderstanding (Stake, 1995). Strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of this study. First, member checking was utilized to ensure that the analysis is descriptive of the participants' experiences, thereby removing a source of researcher bias. Member checking occurs when participants examine rough drafts of writing for accuracy (Stake). The data analysis and interpretation provided a presentation of any discrepant information as another means to remove researcher bias. Second, the bias of the researcher was clarified in order to create an open and honest environment for students and narrative for readers. The researcher explained her role as the Associate Director of Student Conduct on the campus and discussed this role openly with student participants. Third, rich, thick description using vivid language and details was used to present the findings in order to convey the depth of the study and provide an element of shared experiences. Finally "peer debriefers" were used to enhance the accuracy of study. Peer debriefers are individuals who review and ask questions about the study so that the study will make sense and resonate with people other than the researcher (Creswell, 2003).

Role of the Researcher

According to Merriam (1998), the investigator is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing the data. The researcher can maximize opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful data but must also recognize their human fallibility.

Merriam warns that the researcher must have a high tolerance for ambiguity, be highly intuitive and be sensitive to the people involved in the study. The researcher must also be a good communicator and be able to empathize with respondents as well as have active and sound listening skills. As the primary investigator in this study, I have 14 years of experience as an administrator and educator in higher education. I have conducted numerous interviews, counseling sessions and disciplinary conferences with students. I believe these experiences allow me to build a relationship with the participants, make each feel comfortable, and allow me to be sensitive to his/her needs and concerns as well as help the interview process to flow smoothly.

However, for the qualitative research component of this study, it is also important to address my bias as a researcher. At the time of this study, I was serving as Associate Director of Student Conduct at the University of Maryland. My responsibilities included serving as a judicial officer, overseeing the academic integrity process at the University and advising the student honor council. Because of my position at the University, participants may have been uneasy discussing the honor code and academic integrity with me. It was important to interview participants in a neutral setting away from the Office of Student Conduct and reassure students of the purpose of the study and reiterate that the information students provided was strictly confidential. It was possible that student participants could have revealed that they engaged in academic dishonesty while in college. However, students were assured that this information would not be shared or used against them in any way. The University has a procedure for self-reporting acts of academic dishonesty directly to the Chair of the Honor Council. Although it was not necessary in this study, the researcher was prepared to explain the process to students if

they admitted to engaging in academic dishonesty. Furthermore, care was taken to ensure that none of the students who participated in the interviews were part of the Student Honor Council, did not work in the Office of Student Conduct and had not been referred to the Office of Student Conduct for disciplinary violations.

It is also important to note that my interpretation of the data collected may be biased because of these experiences. However, being aware of these biases, conducting member checks, and using peer debriefers, helped to balance my bias as a researcher. Peer debriefers reviewed the transcripts and assisted me in clarifying aspects of the data analysis of the interviews. Any aspects of the data that were unclear or may have been missed were identified by the peer debriefers and were then incorporated into the data analysis.

Ethical Considerations

It is essential to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Confidentiality was assured through adherence to several procedures. First, the names of the individual participants were not used in any identifiable way in the final report, and quoted material was not attributed to any specific individual. Pseudonyms were used in the final report for clarity and to protect the anonymity of the participants. Second, all information collected through interviews was coded for data analysis purposes. A record of these codes is accessible only to the researcher and dissertation chair and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Limitations

Typically quantitative research design utilizes survey procedures and experimental designs. The data is analyzed statistically to generalize the data and support

or refute theories (Creswell, 1994). On the other hand, qualitative designs allow the researcher to derive themes or categories and develop a narrative that presents a pattern or larger picture though multiple levels of analysis. This study employed both techniques, which posed some limitations. Traditionally research has taken the form of either quantitative or qualitative methods but has not used mixed methods until more recently (Creswell, 2003).

A major issue to consider was whether the paradigm must be linked with research methods (Creswell 2003, p. 75). However, in a mixed methods approach, the researcher tends to "base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds" (Creswell, p.18). Collecting both quantitative and qualitative data provided the best understanding of the research problem.

A second major limitation was that this study is not generalizable to the general population. Furthermore, the sample size for the individual interviews was small compared to the population of the University and did not include faculty, staff or graduate students. Research including these populations may have resulted in different findings or conclusions.

Third, it is possible that students chose not be open and honest with the researcher because of my role as the Associate Director of Student Conduct. Students were encouraged to be honest and were reminded that all information shared for the purposes of the study would remain confidential. The researcher conducted interviews in the Career Center at the University which is a neutral location, away from the researcher's office to create a more comfortable environment for student participants.

Lastly, the culture at the University of Maryland is unique compared to many institutions which employ an honor code because honor codes are typically found at smaller, private, and often times religiously affiliated institutions (McCabe & Trevino, 1993). The University of Maryland is a large, public institution with a large commuter population. Additionally, the honor code is relatively new compared to schools like the University of Virginia and William and Mary, each of which has a long history as an honor code institution.

Even with these limitations this research is important because it provided rich description and a better understanding of undergraduate students' perceptions, interpretations and opinions of the honor code at the University of Maryland. The use of a mixed methods approach contributed to this understanding and the conclusions drawn from the study.

CHAPTER FOUR - FINDINGS

To explore how undergraduate students' moral reasoning related to their understanding of the honor code at the University of Maryland, data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The first phase of the study included administering the Defining Issues Test, version two, to 400 undergraduate students in order to assess their stage of moral reasoning. Using the results of the completed DIT2, students were divided into three groups, those who scored high, medium and low on the DIT2. Five students from each of the three groups (high, medium and low) were selected and in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with fifteen students. By conducting the interviews, the researcher was able to understand factors that influence and explain students understanding of the honor code at the University of Maryland. The analysis and findings presented in this chapter focus on the results of the DIT2 as well as the themes that emerged from the interviews. The themes from the interviews were initially developed without the researcher knowing the level of moral reasoning of the group members. The results of the analysis of the interview data were compared to the students' scores on the DIT2 following the completion of the qualitative data analysis.

The following research question framed the study:

How does undergraduate students' moral reasoning relate to their understanding of an honor code?

Summary of Defining Issues Test, Version Two

During the spring semester of 2006, the Defining Issues Test, version two (DIT2), was administered to 400 randomly selected students residing in University housing. A total of 322 students completed and returned the instrument for a response rate of 81%. A total of 93% of the students were between the ages of 18 and 25 with a mean age of 19.4 years. Forty-six percent of the students in the sample identified as male and 54% identified as female. Students in their first year of college comprised 33.5% of the sample, sophomores comprised 30.4%, juniors comprised 15.5% and seniors comprised 17.1%.   The DIT2 was sent to the Center for the Study of Ethical Development at the University of Minnesota for scoring. The scoring center purged 48 cases due to inconsistencies between ratings and rankings, for endorsement of too many meaningless items, for leaving too many items unanswered or for not discriminating among the various items on the instrument. A final sample of 274 participants remained.   For data identified as usable data, the P-score ranged from 4 to 78 with a mean of 35.3 and an N2 score which ranged from 5.61 to 68.29 with a mean N2 score of 34.5. The P-score is an index used to represent a participant's development and is interpreted as the relative importance participants give to principled moral considerations, specifically Kohlberg's stages 5 and 6 (Rest et al., 1997). The mean P-score of the sample correlates with Kohlberg's stages 3 or 4 of moral reasoning out of 6 stages. Kohlberg (1976) defines this as the Conventional level of moral reasoning.

Table 4.1 includes a more detailed description of the total sample including the number and percentages of students in each of the groups as well as their gender and race. As indicated in Table 4.1, the majority of students in the sample were in group C,

which indicates that they were at the Conventional level of moral reasoning. Furthermore most students in the sample were white and were either freshman or sophomores at the University. Group A, which were students who had the highest P-scores and N2 scores had the smallest number of students with slightly more females than males.

Table 4.1. Characteristics of Student Sample DIT2 Group

	Group A (high) n=38	Group B (medium) n=194	Group C (low) n=40	Overall Sample
Group percentages	15.8%	67.8%	16.4%	100.0%
Gender				
Male	42.9%	45.4%	52.0%	46.2%
Female	57.1%	54.6%	48.0%	53.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Race				
Asian	10.0%	16.3%	12.5%	13.0%
Black	3.3%	6.1%	22.5%	14.4%
Foreign	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Hispanic	3.3%	8.2%	10.0%	3.3%
Unknown	6.7%	0.0%	7.5%	7.8%
White	73.4%	69.4	47.5%	59.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Year in School				
Freshman	26.0%	34.5%	35.0%	33.5%
Sophomore	34.0%	33.5%	35.0%	30.4%
Junior	19.0%	14.0%	18.5%	15.5%
Senior	21.0%	18.0%	12.5%	17.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The researcher, with the assistance of the Director of Research and Assessment in the Department of Resident Life, divided students into three groups based on the results of the DIT2. For the purposes of this study, students with a P-score greater than 56 were placed in the "high" group. Their score was consistent with Kohlberg's (1976) stages 5

and 6 which he identifies as the Principled level of moral reasoning. Students who scored between 34 and 38 were placed in the "medium" group which is consistent with Kohlberg's (1976) stages 3 and 4 known as the Conventional level. Students who scored between 4 and 20 were placed in the "low" group which is consistent with stages 1 and 2, which is known as the Preconventional level of or moral reasoning. The cutoff points for the three groups were based on those recommended by Rest (1990) to divide a distribution into groups for comparison purposes. The cutoff points recommended by Rest were slightly different than the cutoff points used in this study which provided greater differences in the P scores between the groups in order to maximize the diferrence between the three groups. Rest (1990) "assigned P scores from 0 to 27 to the lowest third, from 28 to 41 to the middle third, and 42 and above to the highest third" (Turner, et al., 2002, p.307).

Table 4.2 provides a more detailed description of the mean P-scores for the total sample. As indicated in the table, students in group A had the highest mean P-score of all three groups. Their mean P-score of 59.8 was consistent with Kohlberg's (1976) Postconventional level of moral reasoning. Students in group B, had the lowest mean P-score of 14.1 which is consistent with Kohlberg's (1976) Preconventional level of moral reasoning. Finally, students in group C had a mean P-score of 35.3 which is consistent with the Conventional level of moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1976). No statistically significant difference was found among students in this study based on gender or year in school.

Table 4.2. Mean P-scores and Standard Deviation of Sample (N = 274)

	Group A (High)	Group B (Medium)	Group C (Low)	Total
Gender				
Male				
Mean	60.4	35.0	14.2	33.0
Standard Deviation	4.2	8.1	4.6	16.3
Female				
Mean	59.3	35.5	13.8	34.3
Standard Deviation	6.7	8.8	4.0	15.3
Total				
Mean	59.7	35.3	14.0	33.7
Standard Deviation	5.7	8.5	4.3	15.8
Year in School				
Freshman				
Mean	60.9	35.3	15.9	34.7
Standard Deviation	5.8	8.3	3.5	14.1
Sophomore				
Mean	61.0	35.1	13.5	35.1
Standard Deviation	7.0	8.9	4.2	15.6
Junior				
Mean	58.1	36.0	12.2	35.7
Standard Deviation	3.2	9.6	6.4	15.9
Senior				
Mean	58.0	35.0	13.2	36.5
Standard Deviation	4.5	7.2	2.2	13.4
Total				
Mean	59.8	35.3	14.1	35.3
Standard Deviation	5.6	8.4	4.3	14.7

When conducting the individual interviews, the primary researcher was unaware of the student's level of moral reasoning or which group was high, medium or low based on their scores. The Director of Research and Assessment in the Department of Resident Life provided the primary researcher with 15 names of students in each group which she labeled group A, B and C. The primary researcher then contacted each of those students

and set up individual interviews with 5 students from each of the 3 groups. The results
presented next are the themes that emerged in each of the 3 groups.

<div align="center">Summary of Themes</div>

Analysis of the interview data in this study indicated that students at the
University of Maryland understand the honor code in various ways. Major themes
emerged regarding students' attitudes toward the honor code, how they interpreted the
honor code, and the meaning they made of the honor code at the University of Maryland.
Each of the themes are discussed by group based on their scores on the DIT2.

<div align="center">*Group A – "Common Sense"*</div>

Results of the DIT2 indicated that students in group A received the highest P-
scores of the students in the qualitative sample. Results of the DIT2 showed that students
in this group had a mean P-score of 62.8 which is higher than the mean of 42.3 which is
reported by Rest (1994) as the mean score of college students in his study of thousands of
students. This group was labeled "high" for the purposes of this study. Table 4.3
represents an overview of the demographics of the 5 students.

Table 4.3. Group A Participant Demographics

Name	Sex	Age	Race	Religion	Year in school/Major	Activities	P - score
Khari	male	22	African	Methodist	Senior/Economics	Track	64
Amy	female	20	Caucasian	Jewish	Junior/Criminology	Hillel Works on Campus	58
Jim	male	20	Caucasian	Catholic	Sophomore/Anthropology & Spanish	none	70
Jose	male	19	Latino	Catholic	Sophomore/Art Major	none	64
Mai	female	22	Chinese-American	none	Junior /Chinese Language	Language House	58

Khari was a graduating senior majoring in Economics. He identified himself as African and is a former athlete at the University. Khari attended a private high school with an honor code in Westchester County in New York State. Khari believed that family and peers significantly influenced students' behavior and attitudes about cheating and academic integrity. Khari valued academic integrity for himself but would not confront other students he observed cheating, despite the fact that he believed cheating was prevalent. For Khari, the purpose of an honor code was to set standards of conduct and to enhance moral values.

Amy was a junior majoring in Criminology. She identified herself as Caucasian and was heavily involved in Hillel, the Jewish student group on campus. Amy attended a private, Jewish high school that did not have an honor code. Amy was familiar with many aspects of the honor code and clearly valued honesty. Although she would not cheat, she had grown to be more supportive of the honor code, however; she was concerned that some students were punished for making innocent mistakes. Much of her attitude and understanding of the honor code came about because her roommate in her

freshman year was charged with plagiarism. She believed the purpose of an honor code was to, "set a basis for not cheating and not plagiarizing."

Jim was a sophomore majoring in Anthropology and Spanish who transferred to the University during his second semester of his first year in college. He identified as Caucasian and was baptized Roman Catholic but did not practice his religion. He attended a public high school with an honor code.   Jim believed that an honor code was "fundamental to the stability of the institution." He believed it was important to ensure that students' work is original. Many of Jim's attitudes toward the honor code and toward academic integrity were in line with how he viewed education. He believed that if students were "really going to get something out of any class, you not only have to be involved and attentive, but also have an interactive relationship with your professors and with other students in the classroom." He believed that strict punishment for academic dishonesty was sometimes necessary but "a better way to look at it is how can we change people's minds and really make a difference in people's lives."

Jose was a sophomore majoring in Art who identified himself as Latino. He considered himself a "non-practicing Catholic." He attended a small private school with an honor code in high school and middle school. He considered the honor code at the University "an extension" of the honor code from his high school.   He said he took the honor code seriously but did not believe that other students took it as seriously as he did. Jose thought that the honor pledge had a small impact on students' behaviors because students who signed the honor pledge might have been less likely to cheat than those who did not. He believed that the purpose of the honor code was to help students "develop into a moral upstanding citizen."

Mai was a Junior majoring in Chinese language. She identified herself as Asian with no particular religious affiliation. She attended a public high school without an honor code. Mai said she was a deep thinker who spent considerable time reflecting on the meaning of life. Mai believed that the honor code was basic common sense and that students should be honest because honesty was expected at the University. Although Mai had not observed academic dishonesty at the University, she believed that it was prevalent on campus. She said that she heard her friends discuss how other students cheat. She believed that students needed standards and the honor code was a reminder to students that standards existed at the University. Mai believed that faculty members frequently stressed the honor code and students at the University were reminded numerous times that the honor code existed.

Students in this group had the highest P-scores and N2 scores out of the 3 groups of students in the study. Their scores on the DIT2 indicate that students in group A tended to use a high degree of principled moral reasoning which typically correlates with Kohlberg's stages 5 and 6, identified as the Principled level (Kohlberg, 1976). As stated in Chapter 1, Kohlberg's (1976) theory of moral development focuses on an individual's reasoning process used to make moral judgments. Kohlberg (1976) posited that individuals at the Principled level define moral values in terms of universal fairness and justice.

Through the interview process, students confirmed that their level of moral reasoning was sometimes consistent with Kohlberg's characterization. Students in this group had a high degree of appreciation for the values of honesty and integrity in academics and in how they live their lives. They had a positive attitude toward the honor

code and did not condone academic dishonesty. Students believed that the honor code is common sense and therefore did not differentiate between the honor code and honor pledge because the *principle* of academic integrity is evident in both.

Students in this group did not believe that the honor code makes a difference in their own behavior and believed that other students rarely considered the honor pledge when deciding whether or not to commit academic dishonesty. Although they supported the honor code and the values of the honor code, they believed that other factors such as family, prior experiences, and personal values played a larger role in the decision to uphold academic integrity. They believed that faculty behavior impacted students' decisions regarding academic dishonesty and their attitudes toward the honor code.

Rest (1979a) proposed an individual may shift between stages of moral development depending on personal experiences and the nature of the dilemma they are facing. Students in this group confirmed Rest's notation of shifting between the stages of moral reasoning. Despite their high level of moral reasoning, students were reluctant to report their peers for academic dishonesty. Their behavior and the reasons for their behavior were more consistent with students at lower levels or moral reasoning. Although some realized that they should report others, they found this aspect of upholding the *Code of Academic Integrity* difficult. Finally, they believed that cheating was not worth the consequences; which is more indicative of students at lower levels of moral reasoning.

Meaning Students Made of the Honor Code

The students in this group expected the University to have an honor code and they expected to be held to the standards of the honor code. For students in this group the honor code was not a complicated or complex document, it simply implied that students

would be honest in their academic work. The principle of the honor code was really what was important to these students. They defined the honor code as a standard for making moral and ethical decisions regarding academic dishonesty and viewed the honor code as a message to the University community that academic integrity was important and valued at the institution. Their view was consistent with individuals in the Principled level of moral reasoning. Consequently, all of the students in this group believed that the honor code was basically "common sense." Mai summed up the honor code with a simple statement, "I think its common sense, it's the minimal - how you should be as a person – be honest!" Mai believed that students at the University should not be surprised at the expectations or standards that are set forth in the honor code. Instead, she believes that the honor code sets the minimum standard that is, and should be expected, at an institution of higher learning. Simply, Mai believed that people should be honest because she valued the principles of honesty and integrity in her own life and expected others to as well.

Jose and Amy believed that students knew that cheating was wrong and regardless of whether or not students knew the exact wording in the honor code, students understood academic dishonesty was against the rules and students were expected to abide by the honor code. Jose said "I think it's just understood. It's kind of a given that you're supposed to uphold it (the honor code)." Amy agreed with Jose explaining that "you're bound to it (the honor code) because you go here." So for these students regardless of whether or not students had read the *Code of Academic Integrity*, what was stated in the *Code* was common sense because they were aware that academic dishonesty was prohibited.

For students in the "Common Sense" group, the honor pledge summarized and synthesized the meaning behind the honor code which was simply common sense to them. They learned throughout their education and upbringing that cheating was unfair to them and others. Therefore, the honor code stated what was obvious to them in terms of their behavior regarding academic integrity. Students in the "high" group did not differentiate between the honor code as a complete document and different aspects of the honor code such as the honor pledge because the meaning behind both was the same. The honor pledge is one part of the *Code of Academic Integrity* at the University but students' responses indicated that they believed that the honor code and the honor pledge were synonymous. For example, when asked to, "Tell me what you know about the honor code at the University of Maryland," many of the students responded as if they were being asked about their knowledge of the honor pledge not the honor code. Khari responded, "I know that we write it down, depending on the professor's discretion, we write it down on all our exams, all our papers." However, for students in this group there was a deeper meaning than just simply writing out the honor pledge. The honor code applied to all of their academic work and according to Khari "it's implied whenever we do anything academic." Khari explained how he interpreted the meaning of the honor code. "For example, if I told the professor I can't take an exam because I'm sick, the honor code implies that I am really sick and I have a good excuse as why I can't attend." The honor code implied that students would be honest in their work and with their instructors about issues involving their academic work.

Jim was familiar with writing out the honor pledge. He said, "I know I have to write it out every time I take a test. My understanding of it is that it's pretty much

equivalent to any honor code." He was familiar with honor codes and knew that honor codes varied by institution. Jim said, "I guess some schools, like I know the University of Virginia, for example, they put more faith in the students to do things on their own." Jim explained what he believed to be the differences between the University of Maryland honor code and honor codes at other institutions. He said, "For example, I know they can take tests without any supervision and things like that. But all I really know is to write this thing out that says I am not receiving any authorized assistance on this examination." So for Jim, the act of writing out the honor pledge simply reiterated that he had not cheated.

Amy also equated the honor code with the honor pledge. She said, "You're bound to it, even if you don't write it on any of your papers." So for Amy, regardless of whether a student chooses to write out the honor pledge as a part of the honor code, students must adhere to the *Code of Academic Integrity*.

The meaning that students made of the honor code was indicative of students' in the Principled level of moral reasoning. Since they already supported the values of honesty and integrity, it was not necessary for them to differentiate between the honor code and the honor pledge. Students viewed the pledge as synonymous with the honor code because the honor code and the honor pledge both communicated to students that academic integrity was important. Therefore it was the principle behind the honor code that was important for these students. The principle of academic integrity and honesty was important for these students because the honor code represented what was fair and just to the campus community which was indicative of individuals at the Principled level of moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1976). Specifically, individuals in the principled level of

moral reasoning believed that one must do what is considered best for the greater society. Students in the "Common Sense" group clearly believed that upholding academic integrity was best for the greater campus community. It is important to recognize that individuals in the Conventional level of moral reasoning may also recognize the need to do what is considered best for the greater society. However, individuals in the Conventional level focus more on their desire to do what is considered "right" based on the established laws (Kohlberg, 1976) rather than those in the Postconventional group who focus on what they believe is "right" and ethical.

Attitudes Toward the Honor Code

Students support the principle of an honor code. Analysis of the data showed that students in this group shared a genuinely favorable overall attitude toward the honor code. Students supported the principle of an honor code at an institution of higher learning and recognized the importance of academic integrity as a value of the University. Specifically they believed that the honor code communicated that academic integrity and honesty was an underlying value at the University. The honor code also helped to emphasize to students that obtaining an honest education was fair and just to the greater campus community. This is consistent with individuals who reason at the Principled level of moral reasoning who value universal fairness and justice (Kohlberg, 1976).

Jim showed strong support for the principles of the honor code. He said, "I appreciate its value more now that I understand it, and the more (academic) work I do, the more I understand how the institution works." Jim said that his academic work and attitude toward attending college are likely different than those of other students because

he experienced the death of his mother just prior to enrolling at the University. The death of his mother helped him to appreciate the opportunity to learn and attend classes at the University because it made him realize how short life can be. Specifically, he believed that it was a privilege to attend college. Therefore, he believed that students should not violate that privilege by cheating. He also believed that some students were more likely to have a negative attitude toward policies such as the honor code because they did not value the education they were receiving. Therefore, if students did not appreciate the value of their education, they were more likely to cheat and less likely to have a favorable attitude toward the honor code. Jim believed that the honor code at the University was trying to emphasize the importance of a good and honest education. He said, "I think the best policies that one could have are ones that make people realize why this institution's important."

Some students have developed a more favorable attitude toward the honor code the longer they remained enrolled at the University. For example, Amy knew that the honor code existed when she first arrived at the University, but grew to understand why the honor code was necessary as she observed other students' behaviors and attitudes about cheating.

> At the beginning, I just kind of accepted it. I've been hearing people's views on
> it. Like I've heard friends say, 'Well, I just write it, spell the word wrong and
> then it doesn't count.' I'm like it doesn't work that way, you know. Don't be
> dumb and then I just kind of back it up a little bit more just because I get
> frustrated with people who go against it (the honor code). It's such a simple
> thing. I guess I'm a little bit more supportive as time goes on. (Amy)

Amy's support for the honor code increased during her 3 years at the University as her frustration with her peers that did not value the honor code increased.

Some students in the "Common Sense" group were not surprised that the University had an honor code or that students were held accountable for violating the honor code even if they were unaware of the exact consequences. Jose said, "I take it (the honor code) seriously….for me it's sort of a non-issue that's always been there so I just kind of take it in stride and just abide by it." Jose attended a high school with an honor code and says that he sees the University's honor code as "an extension" of the honor code in his high school.

Mai's attitude toward the honor code was consistent with how she viewed the world based on her spiritual journey in life. She said, "I like the research you are doing it goes hand in hand with what I'm interested in." When probed deeper about her attitude, she said she thought about "leading a life where God rules everything." She said the more she thought about life, the more she found meaning where meaning had not always existed for her. She then experienced what she called her "own realizations and epiphanies." Essentially she made meaning of her experiences in ways that helped her to make more ethical decisions which she believed were more in line with how God wanted her to behave. Mai said that although she thought that the honor code was common sense, she believed that other students did not care about the honor code because all they thought about was partying. She said that students' attitudes toward the honor code had a lot to do with their "view on this world and life in general." She said that although she was not what she called "religious," she believed that religion could help students. She said that education used to be more focused on issues of "morality" but everything had

changed. She believed that we, as a society, need to "go back to a balance" between teaching students about issues of morality and the sciences. Mai said, "You need knowledge but you also need to think more about life in general, which is not encouraged enough." For Mai, the fact that the University had an honor code was one step toward helping students understand the importance of integrity and morality which were two values that she strongly believed were important.

Students in the "Common Sense" supported the principle of an honor code and recognized that the honor code served a purpose. All of the students, on some level, believed that the purpose of the honor code was to set standards and guidelines for behavior related to academic work. There was also a component for some students that included, helping students to make good decisions. Jim said, "I think that really on a basic level I think it (the honor code) kind of points you in a certain direction. And mentally, if I do an assignment knowing that there's the honor code, I can have these certain regulations in mind…what is right and what is wrong." The "direction" that Jim was referring to was helping students make the decision not to commit academic dishonesty.

Some students believed that the honor code existed for reasons other than to just set standards of conduct. Similar to what Mai believed was true about the honor code, Khari believed that the honor code existed, "to set standards of conduct and to enhance our moral values." Although Khari did not elaborate on how an honor code might begin to enhance the moral values of students, Khari explained that students who made the decision not to cheat would benefit from that decision and were less likely to cheat later on in life. Similarly, Jose interpreted the purpose of the honor code as having a larger

impact on students. He said, "what you do here (at the University) will form habits (that will continue) later on in life." So for Jose the purpose of the honor code was to "help you develop into a moral, upstanding citizen."

Amy believed that students were already familiar with the standards outlined in the honor code. She believed that the purpose of the honor code was to "spell out what should be obvious to most students. It's not saying something we haven't heard before." Jim believed that a certain quality of work was expected from students at the college level and believed that the honor code set that standard of quality but also provided a way to hold students accountable for not maintaining a standard of integrity. He said, "It serves as an instrument to maintain a certain level of quality in the work the University is doing. There has to be some sort of way in which the University can reprimand people for breaking the rules, and if there are no rules, there's nothing to break."

Although students in the "Common Sense" group believed that the honor code helped students understand the importance of integrity in their academic work, they also believed that it was necessary to set standards of conduct and to hold students accountable. Although this may not be consistent with their Principled level of moral reasoning, students seemed to view the honor code in a practical sense. They recognized that some students may not uphold the honor code so sanctions must be imposed for students who violated the honor code. This may be more indicative of students in the Conventional level who focus on the importance of obeying rules because of their desire to maintaining the norms of the community.

Honor Code Did Not Make a Difference. Although students in this group looked favorably upon the honor code, most of the students did not believe that the honor code made a significant difference in other students' decisions to cheat or not. Khari believed that by the time students attended the University, they were already predisposed to particular behaviors. He said, "You're already predisposed to cheating or not, just signing my name and saying I'm not going to cheat does not prevent me from having the ability to cheat or the will to cheat." He continued, "I feel like that everybody's pre-disposed to be a certain way. So I feel like telling me I shouldn't cheat doesn't mean that I'm not going to want to or not going to have the ability to, so like it's something that starts with me." Khari did not believe the honor code influenced students' decisions because he believed they arrived at college already prone to cheating.

Amy agreed with Khari but she also believed that some students may have considered cheating depending on the circumstances. Amy said, "I think that basically each person is either going to cheat or not going to cheat and there will be some people who are in that gray area, but those who aren't going to cheat no matter what kind of temptations you put in front of them, they're still not going to cheat. And those who are you can try to put as many stumbling blocks in front of them so they can't, but they'll still figure out a way to try to cheat the system." She continued by explaining that some students would try to get around the system but she also believed that there are some students in a "gray area" who could "sway one way or another." For those students the decision to cheat or not would "depend on what the situation is and whether it's worth it to them to cheat." Essentially Amy indicated that she believed that many students were more concerned with the potential consequences than they were with upholding the value

of academic integrity. Despite Amy's high level of moral reasoning, her comments indicated that she believed that many students were in the Preconventional level of moral development which was characterized by individuals being concerned with avoiding punishment and consequences.

Mai also believed that students "weigh the consequences" when making a decision to cheat or not. Specifically, Mai believed that students would consider whether or not they would get caught and if they did get caught what the possible consequences would be. Even if students were unaware of the exact consequences, students were aware that there were consequences if you were caught cheating so they had to decide if it was worth the risk. She said "everyone knows (the honor code), we've been reminded numerous times since the first day we stepped in here, but they (other students) don't care, when the situation arises, they weigh the consequences and see if it is worth the risk."

For students in the "Common Sense" group, the honor code itself made no difference in their own decision to cheat or not. They came to the University with certain values and had already determined that cheating was not a good decision. Mai said that the honor code made no difference to her because the honor code set the minimum guidelines related to academic behavior, "I've always thought that's the minimal. I agree with it!" Mai said she valued honesty and integrity so the honor code did not state or emphasize values with which she did not agree. She believed that everyone should behave ethically and be honest so the honor code was simply stating these values in terms of academic work.

Students described the process of signing the honor pledge as routine, but they believed that it had little impact on their decision to uphold academic integrity as well. Amy said she only signed the honor pledge if she was asked to do so by her professor but believed that because honesty was expected, it was not important for her to sign the honor pledge. She said, "I do (sign the pledge) if it's asked for. I don't do it if it's not asked for….basically by going here you can't cheat so I don't think it's that important to write it at the end of every assignment." She explained that she did not believe that signing the honor pledge impacted other students' decision to cheat or not. "For somebody who's going to cheat they're going to cheat whether or not they sign it and they don't really care about it."

Students agreed that they signed the pledge only if it was requested or required by the professor. Khari implied that it did not matter whether or not a student signed the honor pledge, all students were expected to uphold academic integrity whether or not they signed the honor pledge.   He said, "It's implied whenever we do anything academic," but agreed that for those students whom he believed were already pre-disposed to academic dishonesty, the honor pledge had little or no impact.

Jose thought that the honor pledge may have had a slight impact on students' decision making, "I think it will make a little bit of difference. They know that they signed it and that it's still kind of in their mind floating around somewhere." So for Jose, the pledge reminded students not to commit academic dishonesty. He believed if students were aware that they signed the pledge, it may have caused students to think before committing academic dishonesty because they had put in writing that the work they were submitting was done honestly and without violating the honor code.

So for students in the "Common Sense" group, the honor code and the honor pledge had little impact on their decisions to uphold academic integrity. They believed that some students were pre-disposed to cheating behaviors and would cheat if they were given the opportunity regardless of the honor pledge. They also believed that other factors had more of an impact on their decisions and the decisions of others students than the honor code.

Factors that Influence Students Attitudes about Academic Integrity and the Honor Code

    Personal experiences.

Students' previous experiences helped to frame their attitudes toward the honor code and academic integrity. This was particularly true when the incident was viewed as serious or critical by the student. For example, Jim experienced the death of his mother just a few months prior to enrolling at the University as a freshman. His entire life was turned upside down following his mother's death. He had recently returned home from a semester studying abroad when his mother became ill. The house he grew up in was sold and he moved in with his father whom he had not lived with in several years. However, as a result he grew to appreciate the opportunity to attend the university and engage in higher learning.

> Coming into college I was really in a transitional period of my life. Not only was
> I moving out but I had sold the house I grew up in. I was moving out of that
> environment but also had to adjust to not having one parent. My primary care
> giver was now my father, whom I'd never lived with. He moved out of the
> country the majority of my upbringing. We get along, but it's been difficult. I've
> been really distracted I would say a lot of times just thinking about all these things

all the time. And sometimes I haven't been able to spend, I would say, the

amount of energy on my academic assignments as I would prefer to. (Jim)

After experiencing the death of his mother, Jim grew to appreciate life more fully and

recognized that he had to take advantage of opportunities that he was given. He realized

that life could be short and therefore wanted to use his time wisely and enjoy what he was

doing at the moment. This included being honest in his academic work and taking

advantage of his college experience. When asked about his thoughts on cheating he said

he would rather not cheat because he valued the opportunity to learn.

I don't feel like it's easier to cheat…I enjoy being here and I don't think anybody

should be here if they don't enjoy what they're doing. I mean we're in an

environment where you can study whatever you want to study. And no matter

who you are, no matter what your interests are, there has to be something that

interests you. And I feel really privileged to have the opportunity to stay here for

four years and read whatever I wanted to read and have access to all these

amazing resources, so you're doing yourself a huge disservice by cheating. (Jim)

Throughout my conversation with Jim, it became clear that his mother's death

helped to shape the decisions he made, how he viewed his experiences at the University

and how he viewed the honor code and academic integrity. Since he suffered such a

significant loss when his mother passed away, he tended to appreciate life and his

experiences. He did not believe that committing academic dishonesty was beneficial to

him.

For Amy, her attitude was framed by an experience as a freshman at the

University. She frequently cited the fact that her roommate from her freshman year had

been referred to the Student Honor Council for plagiarism. Amy maintained that her roommate made an "honest mistake." She said, "Basically she didn't cite something that she needed to have cited, but she didn't realize that putting it in quotations wasn't enough. To get an "XF" on your transcript for a 4.0 student who's never done anything wrong in her life basically, was wrong." She continued, "there are people who deserve that and there and people who don't. And the way it works on the judiciary part of it is basically once you're in front of them (the judiciary board), it is my understanding, you're pretty much in for it because you can't prove it's a mistake because you can't prove intent. I felt like there should be consideration (for situations like this)." The honor council did not agree with Amy's opinion and found her roommate responsible for plagiarism and imposed a grade penalty of an "XF," the normal penalty for academic dishonesty for an undergraduate student at the University.

Amy believed there was a difference between serious cheating and making a mistake. The issue of "intent" was the main difference that she described. She said that there were some students who intended to cheat and other students, like her roommate, who made a mistake such as not citing their paper correctly. She said it was better to let a dishonest person go without a penalty, because, eventually it would catch up to the cheater because they were not learning when they were cheating. She believed that allowing a cheater to go unpunished was better than giving a student who made an honest mistake, an "XF." She said the honest person "will have trouble in the future finding a job or going to grad school or whatever it is when they made a simple mistake." She believed that the honor council could control this issue based on how the honor code was adjudicated. Amy's reasoning was indicative of individuals in the Postconventional level

of moral reasoning. Individuals at this level defined moral values in terms of universal fairness and justice. Amy believed that it was more universally fair to allow a cheater to go unpunished rather than risk punishing a student who was innocent.

Many of Jose's attitudes toward the honor code and toward academic dishonesty were shaped by his experiences in high school. Jose attended a high school with an honor code and he vividly recalled the honor pledge from his high school. When asked to talk about the honor code at his high school, Jose cited the honor code. He said, "I will not lie, cheat or steal and I will respect the rights of all and myself and others." He said, "You know I never cheated, but I know people who did." For Jose, the honor code was an integral part of his high school experience. He expected the University to have an honor code when he arrived and was familiar with the honor code at the University and took it seriously.

Faculty played an important role in students' attitudes and behaviors. More so than any other factor, students in this group placed a heavy emphasis on faculty as both a means to help students understand what was expected of them and also helped to influence students decisions regarding cheating based on faculty behavior. Amy said "every year they re-emphasize (the honor code)." She said that professors emphasized incidents that occurred in the past, and told students that they would be referred to "judicial court" because professors were "trying to scare us." Jose said that his faculty members discussed academic integrity and asked students to sign the honor pledge. He said academic dishonesty "will not be tolerated." He further commented that professors told students "if we catch you, you will be brought before the honor council." Khari simply said "every instructor puts it on (the syllabus)" and Mai said "they (faculty) stress

it a lot." Jim said that "oftentimes they'll write it out on the syllabus. I think a lot of professors kind of see if students have a general understanding of what right is and what wrong is, and don't break the honor code because then you'll be in big trouble. And that's basically the message." Amy said students were more likely to cheat in classes they viewed as a joke or that had a teacher with a reputation of being a pushover or not paying attention. "I know in Crim (Criminology Department) the head of the department teaches a couple classes that I take and in her classes I don't think anybody's going to cheat because they aren't dumb enough. She'd crack down so hard on people who cheat. It's not worth it. Amy explained that the relationship a student had with his/her teacher made a difference. "I think it would for me. I think that if you have a connection with your professor, if you have a bond with them in some way, then you are less likely to want to cheat – I don't want to do that to my professor – it's just wrong." Amy believed professors made her and other students less likely to even consider cheating because of the relationship they formed with their students.

Students in the "Common Sense" group believed that faculty who sent clear messages that academic dishonesty would not be tolerated by discussing the honor code in class and making sure that students knew and understand the code would help to prevent academic dishonesty. They believed that students understood that the University had an honor code and they were expected to abide by it. Faculty members made that abundantly clear. However, the relationship with faculty and faculty behavior in the classroom had an impact on student behavior. If students had a positive relationship with their instructors, they were less likely to commit academic dishonesty. Specifically, they believed that if students respected their instructors and if they wanted their instructors to

respect them, they were less likely to cheat. Furthermore, if they believed that the faculty member was engaged in student learning and cared about the students, they were less likely to cheat than if they believed that the faculty member had no interest in them as a student or as a person.

Although their moral reasoning scores indicated that students in the "Common Sense" group reasoned at the Principled level of moral reasoning, their emphasis on the role of faculty was more indicative of students at the Conventional level of moral reasoning who tend to judge the morality of an action based on the consequences an action may have on their relationship with others (Kohlberg, 1976). This is particularly indicative of individuals in stage 3, where individuals may judge the morality of an action based on the consequences an action may have on a person's relationship with others. However, it is again important to remember that students in group A were college students who ranged in age from 19-22 years old. According to Rest (1979a) it is likely that individuals will move fluidly between the stages, depending on the particular issues with which they are dealing.

Reporting others was difficult and unlikely. Reporting the academic dishonesty of another student is not required but is encouraged in the honor code. The honor code states that anyone who suspects academic dishonesty, should report it to the honor council (*Code of Academic Integrity,*1990, p.1) However, despite their high level of moral reasoning, students in this group agreed that reporting other students for academic dishonesty was difficult for them personally and unlikely to occur for a variety of reasons. Students talked about how they did not want to have to attend hearings, other students cheating did not impact them directly, and some simply did not feel it was their

responsibility to report academic dishonesty. So although students supported the honor code in principle, they would not report academic dishonesty even if they observed it. Jim seemed to feel a sense of obligation to report academic dishonesty. However, he would not report the behavior because he did not want to get involved for several reasons. He rationalized that perhaps the student would not learn anything if he/she was reported. He also assumed that the student would get upset with him and he did not want to create a disturbance for the student, the faculty member, and for himself by reporting the student.

> I don't think I would say anything, honestly. I think even though I would feel obligated to in a certain sense, it's one of those really difficult situations because you're kind of like well that person's kind of confused and I don't think me necessarily going over there and raining on his parade is going to teach him anything. It's just going to tick him off and it's going to create a hassle for him and the teacher and the university and they're going to get into this whole thing. It's like I don't want to have to go to all these hearings and testify or do anything like that. So to be totally honest, I would like to say that, oh yeah I would do something about it, but I wouldn't really. (Jim)

So for Jim, despite his positive attitude and his sense of responsibility, it would be too difficult for him to report another student for academic dishonesty. Despite Jim's high level of moral reasoning, Jim's reasons for not reporting his peers for academic dishonesty are more indicative of students at lower levels of moral development. Specifically, Jim seemed to be concerned about sustaining his own relationships which is more characteristic of individuals in the Conventional level of moral reasoning (Rest, 1994).

Khari did not believe that it was his responsibility to report academic dishonesty or even to encourage people not to cheat because he did not believe it was his responsibility to do so. Khari said, "I personally feel it's not my obligation, even though it does say that in the honor code. I personally don't think it's my obligation to decide whether a person should cheat or not. That's their decision and they can do what they want with their life." Khari rationalized his decision to not get involved when he said that he considered other students' cheating "as an act of life, regardless if it's right or wrong – it happens!" For Khari, he accepted cheating because it existed and he did not believe that he could make a difference in other students' behavior. In fact, Khari appeared forgiving of cheating behavior. He said, "Just because everybody does things that are bad, it doesn't really make you a bad person. Everybody has vices, but I don't judge and I don't think it's my place to tell them to change their lifestyle." He believed that others' decisions and behaviors should not be judged by him and even if he were to confront another student's cheating behavior, it would likely have little or no impact on that student's behavior. Khari's attitude toward reporting other students for academic dishonesty is much more indicative of students at lower levels or moral reasoning than a student in the principled level of moral reasoning. It is important to remember that according to Rest (1979) students may shift between stages depending on the particular issue with which they are dealing. Specifically, Khari's reasoning about reporting other students was more indicative of students in the Preconventional level because he was more concerned with his personal welfare versus doing what was recommended in the *Code of Academic Integrity*.

Students were much more concerned if another students' behavior directly impacted their grade. Amy said, "I guess if the test was going to be curved, it would bother me, especially if they were going to do well on the test because they cheated. If the test isn't curved, I feel like what goes around comes around. Eventually they're going to get screwed for what they're doing, so maybe not this time but the next time."   Amy said that if others' behavior did not negatively affect her directly, then she would not even think about it. However, she recalled a situation from high school where several students were cheating on a test that was curved. She said that her grade was greatly affected by the fact that others were cheating so she went to the teacher and said, "Look, we can't be honest about this, but people were cheating and you need to like refigure how the grades are going to be working because it's not fair." So although she was willing to address the issue of academic dishonesty, she was unwilling to disclose who had actually cheated because she did not want to be the one who told on her classmates. She was much more concerned with how her classmates behavior affected her grade than the fact that they were cheating. Amy's reasoning was much more indicative of individuals at the Preconventional level of moral reasoning. Specifically, Amy was deciding whether or not she would report another student based on what was in her own best interest.   This is indicative of students in stage two of Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (Kohlberg, 1976).

Jose's behavior and reasoning regarding reporting students for academic dishonesty was consistent with that of his peers in the "Common Sense" group. Jose thought about reporting student cheating but decided he would not name the cheater even if he knew the person. He would reluctantly inform the professor that cheating was

occurring but use general and vague language because he did not want to assume responsibility for reporting another student. Jose said, "I don't know. I would probably talk to the professor about it and mention that I saw a few people, I really don't know anybody in my class and it would be a small discussion, but if I mention it, I'd say I saw certain people and that's about it." Jose, along with other students in this group was reluctant to report his peers for academic dishonesty. Despite Jose's tendency to reason at the Principled level, his reasons for not reporting his peers for academic dishonesty were consistent with students in lower levels of moral reasoning, specifically students in the Conventional level who tend to be concerned with maintaining relationships with their peers.

Only one student in this group said she had reported academic dishonesty in the past. Amy said, "I took it to the professor!" She was proud that she actually reported another student for a blatant act of plagiarism which she determined was "dumb" on the part of the offender. However, when she reported the student it was in her capacity as an undergraduate Teaching Assistant not as a peer in the class. Because Amy viewed reporting the plagiarism as her responsibility as a person of authority in the classroom, she could rationalize and defend her actions. In situations where she was a peer in the class, she was not willing to report students because she did not view this as her role.

In summary, despite student's "high" level of moral reasoning they did not want the responsibility of reporting their peers. Their attitudes and reasoning were more indicative of students at lower levels of moral reasoning. Specifically, individuals in the Conventional level typically make decisions that will help to make and sustain friendships (Rest, 1994). Therefore, despite their understanding that they should report

academic dishonesty, students in this group based their reasoning and their actions of not reporting their peers for academic dishonesty on peer approval. It is important to note, that students in this group are still college age students who are likely influenced by their peers. They may not approve of academic dishonesty but were reluctant and unwilling to report their peers, perhaps for fear of repercussions such as being known as a "nark" or a "snitch," for fear of causing the offender to suffer consequences, and because they simply do not want to become involved in what they perceive as a complex judicial process. Although these students tend to be bothered more if they were directly affected by another student's behavior, even then they were reluctant to report academic dishonesty. As college students, they wanted to maintain positive relationships with their peers. Peer reporting was seen as unacceptable by others so students were reluctant to do so regardless of whether they believed it was the right thing to do.

Attitudes Toward Cheating

In addition to sharing their thoughts about their understanding of the honor code, the students in the "Common Sense" group discussed their attitudes toward academic dishonesty which they generally called cheating, despite the fact that most were aware that the honor code included cheating, plagiarism, fabrication and facilitation. For students, the term cheating was inclusive of all forms of academic dishonesty. Students in group A did not believe that cheating was the right decision for them. They believed that honesty and integrity were important and should be upheld regardless of the circumstances or the pressures that students faced during college.

Cheating was not the right decision. Students in the "Common Sense" group agreed that cheating was not the right decision. Jim had an appreciation for the

opportunity to attend the University. He believed he would not learn as much if he engaged in academic dishonesty. Although he understood there were sanctions at the University such as suspension or expulsion, the main reason why he did not engage in academic dishonesty was because he valued and appreciated his education.

> There are so many assignments you have to do and sometimes they can become a little overwhelming and sometimes you can kind of be like, oh, I wish there was a way that I could do this without spending so much energy and being so stressed about it. But I would say I don't feel like it's easier to cheat. First of all, if I would turn in a paper, for example, that I know I just blatantly plagiarized from a book or something I would feel really insecure…so I would be stressed out, which is one of the reasons why I wouldn't do it. Another reason is that I'd probably write the paper faster if I just think of ideas myself and I'm just writing it out.
> (Jim)

Jim did not believe that it was easier to cheat. He would feel stressed and insecure about cheating and believed that he was capable of doing his work without cheating.

> Although he believed that some students cheat because of the pressure to receive good grades, Khari believed that grades are not as important to him as learning. He believed that if he put honest effort into his academic work, then he would learn in return for his efforts. He did not feel the need to commit academic dishonesty because he was focused on learning rather than his grade point average.

> It's not worth it to me, it may be worth it to other people but my happiness isn't dependent on my success in a certain aspect. Like for some people it's life or death whether they get that grade or they get that GPA or they get their job. For

me I mean I know I get what I put into it, so if I didn't put in enough then I can't

complain that I didn't get out enough. (Khari)

Khari believed that his success as a person was not dependent on his grades alone.

Actually learning the material was going to be more beneficial in the long run so that

eventually he could move ahead and be successful.

Jose agreed that cheating was not the right decision for him. He learned that

lesson when he was struggling with a subject in middle school.   Jose said, "You just

don't cheat. I mean when I was little I wasn't doing particularly well in middle school

with mathematics. I was taught basically it was better to honestly fail then to just cheat

and get by with it." Jose said that although he was tempted to cheat, he went to his

teacher for assistance. His teacher helped him to understand that he should persist in

learning the material but should not resort to cheating even if his efforts resulted in

failure in the course. Jose believed that students who were experiencing difficulty with a

class or a particular assignment should have gone to their instructor for help instead of

resorting to cheating. Jose said that he found that teachers were generally "a lot more

forgiving and actually understanding if you come to them" when you are having

difficulty in a class. He continued by saying "it's usually never that bad; I never found

that I've actually considered cheating."   Jose valued his education and learned from an

early age that the learning process was more important than achieving good grades.

Initially, Amy seemed unsure about whether or not she would commit academic

dishonesty. She said that cheating on a homework assignment was "tempting" at times.

She described a situation where students were prohibited from working together on a

homework assignment but were sitting in the same room together and so they might be

tempted to collaborate. Since students are typically encouraged to work together on homework it would be difficult to avoid doing so even if they were prohibited from working together. Ultimately, she concluded that she would was not able to rationalize cheating in any situation.

> I don't think I would cheat. I don't think I'd ever cheat on a test because it just doesn't seem right and it's not you can't rationalize it, period. There's just no way to do it. On a paper I wouldn't either because it's just not worth it.   On a homework assignment it's tempting. And, maybe as I said if your teacher says 'don't work together', you might say, 'Okay, we won't work together; we'll just sit in the same room' and then it's a little more tempting and you might reinterpret what working together means, but I don't think I'd chance it." (Amy)

Despite the temptation, Amy ultimately relied on what she believed to be the right choice and did not engage in academic dishonesty on campus.

Students in the "Common Sense" group believed that upholding the honor code was important to them as individuals. They valued their education and did not believe that cheating was necessary or appropriate.

Pressure to succeed. Students in the "Common Sense" group all shared opinions about why other students cheat. They believed that cheating was pervasive for various reasons but mostly because of the pressure to succeed. Mai said, "Because grades matter so much. It's just so much pressure and it's so much competition you don't want to be ridiculed."   Jose agreed saying that "the pressure to succeed" is the primary reason why students cheat. "You want to do good and you want to get the good job. If you didn't

have the time, or other things happened, or you're just 'dicking' around, and you find yourself in a situation then there is pressure and you succumb to it."

Mai also said that she believed that students who procrastinated were more likely to feel the pressure to cheat because they waited until the last minute to get their work done. "I think cheating has its meaning because of procrastination and kids will procrastinate until the end and feel like they have no other choice (but to cheat) so they end up buying a paper online." She continued by saying "so that one behavior, procrastination, leads students to the temptation to commit academic dishonesty because they're not prepared."

Amy agreed that students felt so much pressure, to not only do well in school, but also to be successful. She said that she believed that students cheated because of the "pressure to succeed." She said, "I know my dad, my parents, want me to do well in school. A lot of the time there just isn't enough time to actually complete your work. Even when you feel you've prepared adequately there just isn't always enough time (to complete assignments). If you had the opportunity (to cheat) I suppose you would take it."

Students at the "high" level of moral reasoning believed that although they did not succumb to the pressure to cheat, other students cheated because of the pressure they experienced as students. They understood that students received pressure from their parents and often had a desire to get good grades and sometimes resort to cheating. So, despite their own decisions not to cheat, they believed that other students cheated because of the "pressure to succeed."

Cheating is habitual. Students in the "Common Sense" group believed that cheating was habitual for students who engaged in academic dishonesty. They believed that students who cheated in college were likely to continue cheating when they left the University and entered the workforce. Students likened cheating to any bad habit. Khari talked about cheating as an "approach to life."

> I would consider it a kind of approach to life. Everybody has a different way of looking at the world and dealing with problems on an everyday basis. And if one person's way of coping with things is to get through them and what they think is the easiest way possible no matter the means, I can definitely understand that, but, at the same time, I don't choose to do that. Like I said before, I don't really think it's easier to cheat.

> Khari said that students who cheat in college, continued to cheat later on in life. Khari understood that people cheated because sometimes cheating was beneficial, especially if you don't get caught. Despite the fact that some cheaters get ahead, he chose not to cheat. He said "I think that they're going to find themselves in a better position than I, and it sucks, but that's life."

> Mai said, "It affects you, like everything affects you, later on in life, too. Like what you study is going to be your career and once you cheat if you're a bio major you're not going to be as good of a doctor later on. I think it affects everything!"

> Amy believed that cheaters would find it difficult to succeed after college because they would not have learned the skills necessary to succeed in their job. "I think if you never learn how to really do well on your own, you're going to continue that in the real world, but when it comes down to writing papers at some point your boss is going to ask

you to do something and you can't copy off of someone else and it's going to catch up to you."

Jose believed that students who developed good habits in college, like doing honest work, would continue habits that would help them in future endeavors and challenges. He said that "it may be a cliché" but college is "like the first steps to the rest of your life" and he believes that if students "become just and moral a lot of redeeming qualities will start in here (in college)."

In summary, students in the "Common Sense' group appreciated and respected the honor code. Their reasoning was indicative of students who made decisions at the Principled level of moral reasoning, with some exceptions. They believed that the honor code was common sense because they appreciated the values of honesty and integrity in academics and in other aspects of their lives. They chose to follow the honor code by not engaging in academic dishonesty, but were reluctant to report their peers. Students in this group believed that other students committed academic dishonesty for a variety of reason but especially because there was so much pressure to succeed. Although they believed in the principle of the honor code, they did not believe that it had a significant influence on their own or other students' behavior. Their personal experiences as well as faculty behavior appeared to have the largest impact on their attitudes and their behaviors regarding academic integrity.

Group B – "Do What is Expected"

Results of the DIT2 indicated that the P-scores of students in this group were in the middle of those students in groups A and C. They were placed in the group labeled "medium" for the purposes of this study. Results of the DIT2 showed that students in this

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group received a mean P-score of 37.2. Their scores indicated that this group's mean P-score was closest of all three groups to the mean of 42.3 which was reported by Rest (1994) as the mean score of college students in his study of thousands of students. Students in this group tended to reason in stages 3 and 4, the Conventional level of moral development. Typically persons who reason at this stage demonstrate a concern for others and judge the morality of action by comparing their actions to actions that are socially acceptable. As noted in Table 4.4, students who scored in the middle range represented the largest group of students in the total sample.   The chart below represents an overview of the demographics of the 5 students who were individually interviewed.

Table 4.4. Group B Participant Demographics

Name	Sex	Age	Race	Religion	Year in School/Major	Activities	P-Score
Ethan	male	18	Caucasian	None	Freshman/ Undecided	None	38
Daniel	male	21	Caucasian	Unitarian Universalist	Senior/Aerospace Engineering	University Concert Bands/ Dept activities	38
Matthew	male	22	Asian	None	Senior/Computer Science/ Economics	Quest Program	38
Samantha	female	19	Caucasian	Catholic	Freshman Education/ History	Sorority	34
Ava	female	20	Caucasian	Christian	Junior/Public Relations	None	38

Ethan was a freshman student who was undecided about what he wanted to major in at the University.   He was in the honors program at the University but was unsure as to his career goals. He attended a public high school in Maryland and did not know if his

school had an honor code. When asked about the purpose of the honor code, he replied "I don't see any purpose of it." He recalled signing the honor pledge at orientation but said that he did not learn "anything surprising." He said he already knew that cheating was prohibited at the University. He had a basic understanding of the honor code and what it entails and when prompted to talk more about its purpose, he said that the purpose was "basically a standard of behavior so that you (the University) can compare students to each other." Ethan meant that if students cheated, you cannot compare their work to students who did not cheat. Therefore, by employing an honor code to encourage students not to cheat, it was easier to compare students' work to one another. He said that he did not believe that the honor code was "useful or necessary" because he did not "really agree with the whole principle of setting standards for people to follow." He believed that people should be free to make their own decisions and set their own standards of conduct because people "should be able to act based on their individual interests. In that way there's a balance to society."

Daniel was a senior Aerospace Engineering student who identified himself as Caucasian. He said that he was a quarter Hispanic but he did not identify with being Latino. Daniel said that much of his outlook on life came from his religious background as a Unitarian Universalist. Daniel said he was a hard-worker and had no problem signing the honor pledge. He believed that he had become a bit less naïve about the amount of cheating that actually occurred on campus.   He said that for him honesty in general had been important and even though he did not approve of cheating, he said that he did not usually worry about other student's behavior, even when they were cheating because he would rather focus on his own work and his own learning.

Matthew was a senior, majoring in Computer Science and Economics. He identified as Asian and had no religious affiliation. He attended public school prior to attending the University and moved frequently while growing up. He was in the Quest Honors Program which involved both the College of Engineering and the Smith School of Business. He was also part of the Global Communities Living and Learning Program. He believed that these experiences influenced him significantly in terms of his future goals and aspirations. He said that he signed the honor pledge after he completed his academic assignment because it made "me feel good about myself." He believed that the honor code was about upholding your own ethical standards and believed that if students left the University with a degree that "you want to make sure you earned it the right way."

Samantha was a sophomore, Education and History major. Samantha attended a private, Catholic high school with an honor code. Her religious background was very influential on her viewpoints and her values. She said she had written the honor pledge numerous times since she began at the University. In her experience, the honor code had been emphasized significantly. She was not surprised to learn about the prevalence of academic dishonesty in college but would be reluctant to report another student's misconduct if she observed it. She believed that the purpose of the honor code was to insure that students did their own work and "don't take what other people worked hard for."

Ava was a junior, majoring in Public Relations. She attended a public high school with an honor code and recalled signing the honor scroll at orientation. She said that her personal attitude toward academic integrity and the honor code had not changed since

beginning her studies at the University but questioned the effectiveness of the honor code because she "see(s) cheating going on all the time." She described most of the incidents of cheating as unauthorized collaboration on tests and using others work for papers without proper attribution. She believed that it was necessary to have an honor code but said, "I don't know that it's respected." She believed that students considered whether or not they would get caught cheating when making a decision to commit academic dishonesty.

Based on their scores on the DIT2, students in this group tended to reason in stages 3 and 4 which Kohlberg identified as the Conventional level of moral reasoning. According to Kohlberg (1976) this level is typical of adolescents and adults. In stage 3, concern is centered on maintaining one's image as a good person and gaining the approval of others. Individuals have learned that conforming and living up to the expectations of others has inherent value. Individuals at this stage may judge the morality of an action based on the consequences an action may have on a person's relationship with others. In stage 4, individuals desire to uphold the laws established by society and define what is "right" based on the established laws (Kohlberg, 1976).

Similar to students in the "Common Sense" group, students in this group generally had a positive attitude toward the honor code and did not condone academic dishonesty. Students were generally aware that the honor code existed and understood what behavior was prohibited by the honor code. They believed that the consequences were severe for those students who were found responsible for violating the honor code. However, just as students in the "Common Sense" group, they did not believe that the honor code made a difference in student behavior and believed that students rarely

considered the honor pledge when deciding whether or not to commit academic dishonesty. Students were reluctant to report their peers and believed that faculty behavior impacted students' decisions regarding academic dishonesty and their attitudes toward the honor code. Students in this group believed that students' behavior was influenced by their values and judged the morality of actions by comparing their actions to actions that were socially acceptable. They also tended to focus on the importance of following the honor code because of its importance to the community.

Meaning Students Made of the Honor Code

Students were aware of the honor code and prohibited behavior. Similar to students in "Common Sense", three of the five students in the "Do What is Right" group equated the honor code with the honor pledge. When asked to describe what they knew about the honor code several of the students talked about the pledge. Samantha said, "I know in the honor code we always have to write 'I pledge on my honor that I'm not giving or receiving any unauthorized information on this assignment.' I have written that many times." Samantha also explained "I know (about) plagiarism. I had English 101 last semester, that was a big issue and she (the teacher) emphasized MLA documentation all the time, so I'm very aware of that." Samantha believed that if students were caught cheating, the consequences were severe. She said, "I know that if you get caught cheating, you'll probably get expelled." Ava explained what is prohibited under the *Code of Academic Integrity*. She also spent time in one of her classes comparing the University's honor code with honor codes at other institutions.

> You're not supposed to cheat on exams or papers. To me it's mainly like looking
> at someone else's paper during a test or like taking an exam for someone else.

> Like we had to compare our honor code with the one at the Naval Academy and the one at UVA and it just showed how much less strict we are. Like I remember at UVA you get kicked out and at the Naval Academy too and here you just kind of get an XF, I think. (Ava)

Daniel was anxious to recite the honor pledge as part of his response. He said, "If I think for a minute, I can probably recite it just because I've written it down so many times." As a senior, Daniel has observed that the amount of attention given to the honor code has changed at times.

> My first couple of years here, I read the Diamondback relatively frequently and remember the issues they had with people cheating using cell phones and all sorts of different things. And, so, I guess that was a little bit more attention on it (the honor code) when I first came here then there is now. (Daniel)

Three of the students shared a very simplistic view of the honor code. Matthew replied, "I fill it out on every exam" and Ethan simply said, "It's probably like any other honor code, no cheating and stuff like that." Samantha who attended a high school with an honor code said "well, I think it's just like a given." By this she meant that she expected that the University would set standards regarding academic integrity and would hold students accountable for violation of academic integrity. Samantha's reasoning was indicative of individuals at the Conventional level who desire to uphold the laws established by the University.

When prompted to explain more about the honor code some students were able to share specific details of how the honor code governed their behavior. Other students such

as Ethan and Daniel included examples of what constituted academic dishonesty at the University.

> Cheating, either you cheating or facilitating someone else cheating, plagiarizing, submitting somebody else's work as it were your own, which includes like one of your peers or using something on the internet, or a book, not citing the source that you used for a paper, for a math test you bring in a little cheat sheet with formulas on it. (Ethan)

Daniel's response was even more detailed than Ethan's. He explained specific aspects of the honor code and related them to his own experiences as an Aerospace Engineering major.

> Plagiarism, passing other peoples' work off as your own, and worse having answers to a test or receiving any kind of aid or making use of any aid or providing any aid on an exam that isn't authorized. (Daniel)

It was clear that Daniel was familiar with several aspects of the honor code, especially how it related to him in his degree program. He understood how the honor code applied to specific kinds of academic assignments including homework and exams. He was also aware that the honor pledge was part of the honor code and understood the importance of having his faculty set clear expectations regarding academic integrity for assignments.

The meaning that students in "Do What is Expected" group made of the honor code was characteristic of individuals in the Conventional level of moral development who tend to be concerned with authority and who have a desire to uphold the laws established by society (Kohlberg, 1976). They were more aware of the specific behaviors

that were prohibited by the honor code than students in either of the other two groups. They were also more aware of the sanctions that were stated in the *Code of Academic Integrity* than students in groups A or B. They placed a strong emphasis on knowing specific behavior that was prohibited in the honor code. It seems that by being completely familiar with the honor code, they could do what was "right" and uphold the laws or in this case the rules that were established in the *Code of Academic Integrity*.

Honor code was necessary to help students understand what was acceptable. Students in the "Do What is Expected" group viewed the purpose of the honor code and the honor pledge as necessary to help students understand what was socially acceptable. Ethan said he did not really understand the purpose of having an honor code but "people expect the university to have an honor code and it's the measure of the university's respectability and in our society we're expected to have moral standards." Ethan also explained that he specifically did not see a purpose of having an honor code for himself. Despite his lack of support for the honor code he was able to articulate what he believed to be the intended purpose of the honor code. He believed that the honor code was intended to encourage students to do honest work so that when students were graded, the instructor was able to grade a student based on how well they performed on the assignment without cheating and was then able to compare students' work to one another.

> It's a basically set of standards of behavior so that you compare students to each
> other. You know that they are all doing their own work and you can then
> compare the value of each of their work. Otherwise, you don't know where it's
> coming from and you can't judge an individual. (Ethan)

According to Kohlberg (1976) individuals at the Conventional level judge the morality of an action by comparing their action to actions that are socially acceptable. Ethan's response was indicative of an individual at the Conventional level. His notion of comparing students to one another "so you can judge them against others" was typical of individuals at this level.

Samantha believed that the purpose of the honor code was "just to keep people from taking other people's work because other people work hard." Samantha believed, "it's not right for them (cheaters) to take what they (other students) worked for." Daniel believed that the purpose of the honor code was to provide a set of standards or guidelines for students and to help create a culture of honesty among students.

It seems like the intention is to (create) a sense of community standards…the University has a big push in its academics, so academics without academic honesty really doesn't mean much. Part of that push is to try and get people to think about it and trying to instill that the honor code is just part of the culture at the university. (Daniel)

Matthew said, "I think it's to like instill fear in people, otherwise it wouldn't have to exist." He said if the honor code was not stated on everything that people might assume that students would be honest, but "you know most people aren't, so you have to like scare those people. People are scared of getting caught." At first, Matthew was laughing when he talked about the purpose of the honor code. He became more serious when asked how he would describe the purpose of the honor code to another student.

It's about hard work and fighting off the pressures and trying to catch up or get ahead. And it's not only about what's going on right now but what's going on in

the future as well because what you do during college will affect everything after, especially with the transcripts. And, if you do fall behind one semester, then you just take those grades and it should affect how you study for the rest of the time. You don't want to keep digging yourself into a hole by being dishonest, so just don't cheat. (Matthew)

Matthew believed that the purpose of the honor code was to help students make decisions that could affect them later on in life.   Specifically, the honor code existed to prevent students from cheating. For students who cheated, it could be difficult to get a job or to get into graduate school with an "XF" grade on their transcript. For those students who were not caught cheating, Matthew believed that they may continue cheating which could cause them to encounter problems in graduate school or in their careers. He believed that the honor code was in place to try to help students make better choices so they could avoid negative consequences throughout their life.

Consequences are strict. Students in this group tended to be more familiar with the sanctions for students who were found responsible for committing academic dishonesty than students in the other two groups. Matthew said that if you are found responsible for committing academic dishonesty, "you get an XF which means failure due to academic dishonesty." He was matter of fact and confident that he knew and understood the consequences of academic dishonesty. He was correct in his understanding of the consequences.

Daniel said that he believed that the consequences were what mattered most to other students. He believed that the consequences for academic dishonesty were severe. "There's failure due to academic dishonesty which is goes on your transcript, so that's a

pretty serious one. I'm pretty sure you go before the honor council and so I guess there's a certain amount of trial by your peers and then you're faced with expulsion." Daniel said that if a student with an XF had to provide a transcript to an employer, the consequences were even more extensive. "If you show it (your transcript) to the employer and give them your transcript and it has a failure due to academic dishonesty, then that's not an insignificant thing. And if you get expelled for academic dishonesty, then that's an even more serious thing."   Daniel seemed genuinely concerned that students would risk such consequences by cheating.

Ava was somewhat hesitant because she did not seem to be confident that her response was correct even though she is in her third year at the University. She shared her understanding of the potential consequences for students who are found responsible for academic dishonesty. She said that the grade penalty of an "XF" means that the student "failed to complete the course" because of cheating. However, Ava was unsure of further consequences and was unaware of the transcript notation that accompanies the grade of an "XF."

Although students in the "Do What is Expected" group were familiar with the consequences of violating the honor code, their motivation to uphold the *Code of Academic Integrity* was not due to the punishments stated in the *Code.* Their motivation to uphold the honor code was based on their desire to uphold the standards of the community**.** In order to uphold the honor code, they had to be familiar with the entire honor code including the sanctions for violating the honor code. This notion is indicative of individuals in the Conventional level of moral development.

Students were accustomed to signing the honor pledge. Students in this group were accustomed to signing the honor pledge and seemed to have no problem doing it regularly. Some students felt that the honor pledge served as a reminder to students not to cheat. Other students were not quite sure what purpose the honor pledge served, but signed it regardless of whether they believed it had an impact on their behavior because they were asked to do so by their professors and instructors. Samantha believed that the honor pledge served multiple purposes.

> Well, I think the honor pledge is part of the honor code because that way if you are caught cheating, they can be like well you wrote this down. You obviously knew you weren't supposed to cheat and we caught you doing it anyway. I guess it can serve as more severe punishment. It helps you from cheating like I signed the pledge like I shouldn't cheat and like that. Yeah, I think it does serve as a reminder, yeah. (Samantha)

Ava said that the honor pledge did not "change what I'm going to do, but maybe it's a good reminder (not to cheat)." Ava also said that she only wrote out the honor pledge and signed it if she was asked to by her professors. She said that she typically signed the honor pledge on her exams because it was required, but rarely did so on academic papers.

Daniel's understanding of signing the honor pledge was accurate. He said, "My understanding is that it's voluntary to put down on assignments." Under the University's *Code of Academic Integrity*, signing the honor pledge is voluntary but students are encouraged to do so. Daniel said that he has always worked very hard on his academic work "and, so, it's sort of no problem for me to sign it." Ethan also understood that

signing the honor pledge was voluntary. He said that he typically signed the honor

pledge on exams and believed that regardless of whether or not a student signed the

honor pledge, they would be held accountable if they violated the *Code of Academic*

Integrity. He said since he was not planning on cheating, "I go ahead and write it out and

sign it because I figure why not."

The behavior of students in the "Do what is Expected" group regarding the honor

pledge was indicative of individuals in the Conventional level because their behavior

appeared to be guided by the expectations of the faculty members regarding signing the

honor pledge. Regardless of whether or not signing the honor pledge made a difference

in their behavior, they believed that signing the honor pledge was the right thing to do

because they were asked to do so by their instructors, in other words, they were expected

to sign the honor pledge. According to Kohlberg (1981), individuals in the Conventional

level of moral reasoning are concerned with the expectations of authorities. Individuals

at this level have also learned that conforming and living up to the expectation of others

has inherent value (Kohlberg, 1976). Therefore it is likely that individuals in the "Do

What is Expected" group signed the honor pledge in order to build and maintain their

image as a good person who is doing what is expected of them.

Attitudes Toward the Honor Code

Students had varied attitudes toward the honor code. Students in this group had

varied attitudes towards the honor code. Matthew admitted that he was not familiar with

all aspects of the honor code but he agreed with the principles behind the honor code.

He said, "If you're going to be leaving with a degree, you want to at least make sure you

earned it the right way." As a successful student in a living/learning program on campus,

Matthew seemed to have little tolerance for academic dishonesty. He said, "I actually applaud professors that hand out "XF's" because I think it shows a lot of commitment on their (the faculty) side to keep everyone honest." He said that although he was reluctant to report cheating, he was willing to report another student for cheating if necessary, specifically, if their behavior negatively impacted his grade. He said he did not enjoy reporting other students but said "if (cheaters) were to gain an unfair advantage and mess up the distribution of grades and if they were applying for same job (as me) and have false credentials…it's unfair competition." Therefore, Matthew was willing to report other students if their behavior negatively impacted him. Matthew's reasoning, like his peers in groups A and B, is indicative of individuals in the Preconventional level of moral reasoning who are largely concerned with their personal welfare.

As an Education major, Samantha was also supportive of the honor code. Samantha explained that since she came from a high school with an honor code her attitude toward the University's honor code had not changed during her enrollment at the University. She was familiar with the behaviors such as cheating and plagiarism that are specifically prohibited in the honor code because the same prohibitions were stated in her high school's honor code. She was supportive of her high school's honor code and is also supportive of the honor code at the University. She believed that the way the faculty enforced the honor code was very important to students and whether or not students followed the honor code. She said that students are more likely to uphold the honor code if they respect their instructors and if they have a good relationship with their instructors. She discussed what she plans on doing when she becomes a teacher. She believes that if

she offers support to students who may need assistance they would not have any reason to cheat.

> I'm definitely going to enforce the honor code when I'm teaching. I'm going to try to like show them and let my children know you shouldn't want to take somebody else's work. You want to do things for yourself and that's the way you've learned and everything like that. And one that I'm going to stress as a teacher when I teach is that like people can come to me for help if they ever need anything. That's the one thing I feel a lot of professors and teachers, in general, don't stress enough. Like when people I see like there are lot of shy kids. I was one of the shyer kids. I was very shy when I was young. And I'd get confused and everything, but for some reason like some teachers scared me and I didn't want to go and ask for help. And I would go to my friends or something and they didn't know what they were really doing, (Laughter) so that's one thing I want to stress. So, instead of doing dishonest work or not doing the assignment right, I want to stress when I'm an older teacher to come to me if you have any questions regarding anything" (Samantha)

As an education major, Samantha strongly supported the honor code and believed that it is her responsibility to uphold the honor code because she wants her students to act with integrity. However, she believed that if she holds her students to a high level of integrity, she has to make sure that she supports students in their academic endeavors. Part of the support she wants to give them is being available for extra help and to answer questions that her students may have.

Ava felt that the honor code was important despite the fact that she observed cheating happening all of the time. She felt strongly that academic dishonesty would follow students later in life so she did not get angry about others' cheating but believed that there was never a "good reason" to cheat. When considering whether to commit academic dishonesty, students would consider "whether they're going to get caught" so in some respect the honor code was necessary because it was a way to hold students accountable.

Ethan is the only student in the study who disagreed with the principle of an honor code. He said, "I don't really agree with the whole principle of setting standards for people to follow or with the whole idea that academic integrity is important." Ethan believed that people should be able to make decisions for themselves without the University imposing the value of academic integrity because "so much of integrity is arbitrary." Ethan, despite his clear understanding of the honor code, believed the definition of integrity was different for everyone and he did not consider cheating "in terms of right and wrong." Therefore, he did not understand the purpose of an honor code. He said "I'd like it to be known that I don't think that it's (the honor code) useful or necessary." Despite Ethan's DIT2 score, his reasoning and behavior were more characteristic of individuals in the Preconventional level or moral development who tend to be ego-centric and concerned with their own welfare versus an interest in the needs of others (Kohlberg, 1976).

Matthew said that his attitude toward the honor code had changed since his enrollment at the University. He grew to respect the honor code more and to take it more seriously because he witnessed the consequences to students who were found responsible

for academic dishonesty. As a senior he had observed the consequences to other students when they were found responsible for violating the honor code.

> I think it's changed upon witnessing what has happened or how other people have suffered from it by dishonoring it. Like one of my friends got an "XF" his freshman year, first semester, and then it took him like a year or so to get it off his transcripts. So, I think seeing other people and how it's affected them, but it was never any question for me. (Matthew)

Students in the "Do What is Expected" group were not unlike students in the "Common Sense" group. Generally they had a positive attitude toward the honor code and supported the honor code as a deterrent to academic dishonesty.

Honor code did not make a difference in student behavior. Students in this group were not unlike students in the other two groups. They did not believe that the honor code made a difference in student behavior regarding cheating. They believed that there were other factors that impacted their own decisions as well as the decision of other students. For example, Samantha believed that students would examine the consequences of failing an exam when deciding whether or not to cheat.

> I think when they're deciding whether they want to do it (cheat), if they want to perform something that's dishonest I think there are lot of situations and circumstances that come into play. So, that's why I don't think they (students) really consider the honor code that much because it's like I really want to do good on this, like the exam… so if I fail this exam, I'm not going to graduate and stuff like that. People just don't think of the honor code; they think of like well, I'm not going to pass the class or something. (Samantha)

Samantha believed that students weighed the consequences and the risks of cheating when they were making decisions regarding academic dishonesty. If the consequence of not cheating was failure on an exam, then a student would consider that consequence rather than the fact that the University had an honor code.

Daniel believed that the honor code did not make a difference to him because he had always been "a little bit more cautious about crossing those kinds of lines than most people." He said "in elementary school I was sort of a "goodie two shoes." He said he learned the value of being honest and following the rules from his mother and even as a child, he wanted to know the specific rules so that he could follow them. However, despite his desire to know the rules he said he was not likely to cheat so the honor code did not impact his decision making.   He believed that other students realized that the honor code existed, "but I wouldn't say they'd necessarily consider it. I don't think it plays a very big part in their decision-making process." He believed that the respect that students had for the class, for their degree, and the amount of work that they put into school played a larger role in students' decisions to uphold academic integrity than the honor code itself.

Ava was unsure as to the true impact of the honor code. She wanted to believe that it would make a difference, but she was skeptical. She said that students would "consider whether they're going to get caught. I think that it's necessary even though I don't know that it's respected." I think they (the University) have to encourage people to be honest about their academics, but I don't know (that the honor code is effective).

Given Ethan's negative attitude toward the principle of an honor code he agreed that the honor code was probably not a factor for students when they committed academic dishonesty.

> I don't think they (students) reference it before they make decisions. I think it's more intuitive. Basically, they're just weighing what will be the cost and benefits in every decision. And it's not really something that you ponder over in your head; it's something that's just gut reaction. You just go with it. I think it's (the honor pledge) like writing down the date and they just want to make sure that they wrote down the right thing. (Ethan)

Since Ethan did not see any purpose in the honor code. He believed that students would weigh the risks and benefits of cheating rather than considering the fact that the University had an honor code.

Students in the "Do What is Expected" group generally believed that the honor code did not make a difference in their own behavior or the behavior of other students. They believed that other factors such as the consequences, whether or not they would get caught, their respect for the class, and their upbringing had more of an impact on student behavior.

Peer relationships impact students' decisions. For most of the students in this group the decision to cheat or not was largely dependent on values that were learned prior to attending college. They believed that values came from a variety of places including family, religion and especially peers.

Matthew said that he and his friends "all agree that it's (cheating) not the right thing to do and we are angry at people that do it (cheat) because it puts us at a

disadvantage." Matthew was a serious student whose friends share "similar interests," and "similar feelings" about academic integrity. He said that "you surround yourself with the same type of people so that mostly everyone has the same idea and follows the same academic code." Matthew's reasoning was consistent with individuals at the Conventional level of moral reasoning whose concern was centered on maintaining one's image as a good person and gaining the approval of others.

Samantha agreed that peer behavior was important in influencing students' decisions. She said "If you're with a bunch of people who aren't going to cheat, then the chances of you cheating are probably you won't cheat. But if you're with a bunch of people who don't care, then you're probably going to end up cheating also." Samantha also believed that religion and upbringing were influential when deciding whether or not to uphold academic integrity. "I was brought up in a Catholic high school and household and that's like a pretty huge role. Like the whole 'what would Jesus do?' and stuff like that….so I think upbringing is a huge influence on people's decision making." Most of Samantha's friends from high school had similar upbringing and had similar values to hers.

For Daniel honesty and integrity were important especially in his interactions with his friends. He believed that the decision to cheat or not to cheat had to do with the people's values and how they felt about honesty and integrity. He learned these values from his mother growing up and believed that being honest with people in his day to day life was important. This included doing honest work in college.

Honesty in general has always been kind of important, especially with my interactions with my friends. I find that even when it's inconvenient, it's so

important to be honest because it is difficult to be able to work with people and interact with people if they don't know that what you're saying and what you're telling them is honest. So I've always been very honest with people. (Daniel)

According to Kohlberg (1981), individuals in the Conventional level of moral reasoning tend to seek the approval of others. Concern is centered on maintaining one's image as a good person and gaining the approval of others. Much of the focus of concern for students in the "Do What is Expected' group was their relationship with their peers. They believed that students made decisions regarding academic dishonesty based on what was socially acceptable within one's peer group. According to Kohlberg (1976), their reasoning was consistent with individuals at the Conventional level of moral reasoning.

Faculty influenced student behavior. In addition to students' personal values, students in this group believed that faculty played an important role in upholding the honor code and in students' decisions regarding academic integrity.   The message that faculty provided to students' about academic integrity and the value they placed on academic integrity was conveyed to students in numerous ways. Samantha had discussed the honor code in several of her classes and said that her syllabus in every class had a statement on academic integrity. She said that her English instructor was particularly strict regarding plagiarism. "I'm actually in English 101 right now and that class is so hard, but our teacher is strict, she's like you will need to use the honor code and she's like if I find like one little error, I will penalize you." She said that students "need to follow what the honor code says, because she will strictly enforce it."

Daniel also believed that faculty members had an impact on student behavior. "If the faculty seems more sort of aloof, then the students are going to have less reason to

take their requests for academic honesty seriously." By this Daniel meant that if faculty are not engaged with students in learning process and act as if they do not care if students learn the material, then students will be more likely to disregard any admonishments regarding cheating. He said that most of his faculty members "mention it (the honor code) at the beginning of the semester and then it's usually on the syllabus, but as I've gotten up into the higher level classes, they (the faculty) bring it up less and less. According to Daniel, the respect that students had for their faculty members and for their major, contributed to students' behavior regarding academic integrity. He said that the "respect they have for the class, for the degree in general, and the amount of work that they've put in" affects students' decisions regarding academic integrity.   As an Aerospace Engineering major Daniel worked hard in his classes and had a great deal of respect for his faculty members and had a strong desire to become a professional Aerospace Engineer. He said that most of his friends in his major did as well. Therefore they would not consider cheating. He believed that other students who worked hard and who had developed significant respect for their instructors and who had desire to become professionals would also be less likely to cheat.

Matthew agreed that faculty members had an impact on student behavior. "I think it's stressed more based on professor than major. Some professors really stress it. They're like 'don't cheat no matter what or I'm going to give you the XF' and then other teachers don't even mention it, but I think it's understood."

Ava also believed that the relationship that she had with her faculty members had an impact of her decisions to cheat or not and believed this was true for other students as well. Ava wanted her professors to like her and cared what they thought about her. She

believed that this was true for other students as well. She said, "When I get to know my teachers I want them to like me a lot, so I would think that other students would care more about what the teacher thought." Ava sought approval from her faculty members and did not want her professors to suspect that she was doing anything dishonest. She discussed a typical test-taking situation for students and said "like whenever I take a test and the teacher says like they remind you keep your eyes on your own paper, I'm like I hope she doesn't think that I'm looking at someone else's paper, like I always think that when they say that."

Students in group C learned that conforming to the expectations of others and living up to the expectations of others has inherent value. They tended to judge the morality of the action based on the consequences an action may have on a person's relationship with others. It was evident that students in the "Do What is Expected" group valued their relationships with their professors and did not want to damage these relationships by cheating.

Students were unlikely to report their peers. Students were not different than their peers in the other two groups. They were not likely to report their peers for a variety of reasons. Students may have felt indifferent or may have even believed it was not their responsibility to report other students. Even for those students who supported the honor code in principle, it was difficult to consider reporting their peers unless it affected them directly. Samantha, although reluctant to report her peers, would be troubled if another student took advantage of her.

> If I saw someone cheating off of somebody else, I probably would just feel like
>
> whatever. But if I saw someone cheating off of me, I would take it more….I

would get very agitated if that happened…but even though I may not know them personally, I don't want to make a big deal out of it because a lot of people cheat for a lot of different reasons. I wouldn't ever want to get myself in trouble that's why I would probably cover my answers and I probably wouldn't report them. (Samantha)

Despite her agitation, Samantha was unlikely to report her peers.

Ava seemed to struggle with the idea of reporting another student for academic dishonesty. Again, it would be more likely for her to report the student if they cheated from her but she was concerned about the consequences to the cheater. "I probably wouldn't like raise my hand and tell on them. I'd probably just try and cover my paper more, but I probably would if I found out later that they had. But then, again, if they were my friend I don't know. Like I wouldn't want them to get in trouble, so I don't know (what I would do)." Ava's response was similar to students in the low group, who did not want to get other students in trouble by reporting them.

Matthew was the only student in this group who reported another student. He recalled "I remember one time in high school one of my acquaintances was cheating on an exam and I actually pointed it out to my teacher. I wasn't happy to do it, but it's not fair that I study myself and this guy is like cheating right there in class." Matthew also explained that as a senior he was less concerned with any consequences for him such as being known as a "snitch" or a "nark" if he were to report another student. He seemed to outgrow the need to seek approval from his peers and did not mind if others considered his behavior to be inappropriate because he was more concerned with doing what was "right" based on the *Code of Academic Integrity*. At first glance it appeared that

Matthew's reasoning was consistent with individuals in the Conventional level of moral reasoning who were concerned with what is 'right" and had moved beyond many of his peers. However, like most of his peers, he concluded that regardless of whether or not he reported an incident, the cheater would suffer consequences. So, even though he said he was willing to report students for cheating, he rationalized why he may choose not to report a student.

> I think now I'm more mature. So, I'm not afraid of like any consequences and what might occur because I didn't do anything wrong. Maybe, I know there are times that I haven't done it. I just dismiss it because I'm like they can cheat now, but when the final comes they're not going to do well on it. So, I know like you still pay for it in grades because they're not actually learning the material. (Matthew)

Daniel rationalized his decision not to report other students by explaining that it would be unlikely that he was affected by another student's academic dishonesty. He was focused on himself and how he would be affected by other students' behavior rather than the affects of cheating on the larger community. "Generally speaking, to be honest I usually just sort of focus on my own work and as long as it's just one person or a couple of people doing it, I figure it probably won't affect the curve too much. And it's unfortunate, but I have other things to worry about, so usually I try not to worry about it too much." Daniel's reasoning was more characteristic of individuals in the Preconventional level of moral reasoning who tend to be more concerned with their personal interests rather than with others.

For Ethan the decision to not report his peers was not complex or difficult. He said, "I don't think it's my role to enforce the laws of the university. I don't think I would be committing a wrong by not reporting the cheating."   Ethan's opinion on reporting his peers was consistent with his negative attitude toward the honor code and his concern with what he called his "self-interests." He believed that it was "sometimes beneficial for someone to do that (cheat)." For example, if a student was performing poorly in a class and needed to pass an exam, if there was a low risk of getting caught then cheating may prove to be beneficial to that particular student. However, he explained that, "I wouldn't do that in most situations because it's not usually important enough for me to cheat and I'd rather get the satisfaction from doing it on my own." Ethan believed that it was the University's job to enforce the honor code. He defined the university as people "who set the laws." Although Ethan was in the group with students in the Conventional level of moral reasoning, Ethan's reasoning and behavior were highly characteristic of individuals in the Preconventional level of moral development. His strong ego-centric statements concerning his "self-interests" and focus on what is beneficial to him, is highly characteristic of individuals in stage 1 and 2 (Kohlberg, 1976).

Students in the "Do What is Expected" group were not unlike their peers in the other two groups. They were unlikely to report their peers for academic dishonesty. They were concerned with their grades and maintaining their image as a good person. If another student threatened their grade or their image, they were more likely to be concerned. However, despite their concern, they were unlikely to report their peers. They feared being known as a "nark" or a "snitch." Although students level of moral

reasoning indicated that they were in the Conventional level of moral reasoning, their attitude and behavior toward reporting their peers was sometimes characteristic of individuals at the Preconventional level, particularly when they were concerned about how others behavior affected them. At times students were also concerned with gaining peer approval which is characteristic of individuals in the Conventional level who are concerned with the approval of others, particularly their peers.

Attitudes Toward Cheating

Students in the "Do What is Right" group would generally not consider committing academic dishonesty but they seemed to understand that other students did so for a variety of reasons. Matthew thought that although he has never committed academic dishonesty, if "I were to be involved in academic dishonesty, it would be me helping other people who were seeking help….but…. It's so wrong." Matthew believed that other's dishonesty could affect him because "if they (cheaters) were to get an unfair advantage to get ahead and maybe like mess up the distribution of grades and the curve and of course if we are in the same major and then if we're applying for the same job and they have false credentials, it's like unfair competition." Matthew tended to place a strong emphasis on grades like his peers in the low group.

Ava's attitudes about academic dishonesty were more personal. Ava did not ever consider committing academic dishonesty. She said, "the older I get, when I study really hard, I want to know that I do well because of my studying and my actions. So I just don't even think about looking at anyone else's paper or taking someone else's work."

Daniel was surprised at the amount of academic dishonesty that existed in college. He said he had always been very honest and despite the fact that he had experienced the

same pressures as other students who were also Aerospace Engineering majors, he did not cheat. He was more committed to learning and doing what he believed was "right."

Despite Ethan's negative attitude toward the honor code, he said that he got satisfaction out of doing his own work. He said that he was not surprised at the amount of cheating that occurred at the University because sometimes cheating was "an easier and more efficient option" for completing academic work.

Students cheat for a variety of reasons. For students in this group, the decision to cheat or not was different depending on the cheater's circumstances. Matthew said that students were likely to cheat "on an assignment that the answer is not obvious, like probably like engineering." If students were confused about an assignment the temptation to cheat was greater. However, from a practical perspective, Matthew believed that students also cheated because "they're irresponsible" and they procrastinate which causes them to cheat just to get their work done.   Matthew also believed that some students did not believe in their own abilities so they felt like they needed to cheat.

Samantha believed that students cheated because of competing priorities such as balancing their social life with their academics. At first she seemed unsure as to the reasons why students committed academic dishonesty, but concluded that students cheat for a variety of reasons. She explained that if students had to prepare for three exams in one day, they may be tempted to cheat because they did not have enough time to study for all three of the exams without significantly sacrificing the amount of sleep they could get.

> Well, the sleep factor. If there's like 3 exams in one day, I can see maybe
>
> someone cheating….maybe if they want to go to a party the night before and

don't want to study. I guess there's just a wide range of reasons for people to cheat. In larger classes there would be more cheating definitely. (Samantha)

Ava was unsure why students cheat. "I don't know. I guess I've never been in like one of those really, really hard classes that I just don't have enough time to study for, but even then I mean the reason it's hard is because you need to learn it." Ava concluded that there was really never a good reason to cheat. "I don't really think there is a good time. I don't know. I don't think so. I can't think of anything."

Daniel was concerned that students, who he called "over-achievers," may be driven to commit academic dishonesty because of the pressure associated with being a student and earning grades. He believed that the University and society in general placed a high degree of emphasis on students' grades and believed that students cheated because they were overly concerned with the grades.

> I've realized that for some people – and I've certainly known these people – I think probably everybody has known students all through high school and college who are just completely driven to be over-achievers. And I've had to talk to people and tell them it's okay that you got a B; that's okay. That's not bad; and, so, I do kind of wonder how much of an affect the pressure to achieve especially because in school you put in all this work and everything and the only thing we have getting out of it is our GPA. (Daniel)

Daniel believed that although he was not overly concerned with his grade point average, students learned that grades were very important at a young age. After all the hard work, effort, and learning that takes places, the one tangible thing that students leave college

with are their transcripts. Therefore, the pressure to earn good grades, may cause students to act dishonesty.

Ethan believed that the circumstances dictated whether or not someone would engage in academic dishonesty. For example if a student was under a great deal of pressure or if a students did not value a particular class or assignment then they were more likely to cheat.

> It depends on the situation. Sometimes it's more difficult to cheat than to do it yourself and it depends on your motivation. If you're doing something and don't value the activity at all, there's motivation to cheat. It's like to be able to value yourself, to create an identity of what you're really capable of doing, and I think that's mostly the motivation to not cheat. Otherwise, people would cheat all the time. Because it's an effective way to get ahead in life to perform well and it's easier too than not cheating. (Ethan)

Ethan believed that cheating could be effective at times. For example, if a student was going to fail an examination class without cheating but would pass if they cheated, then cheating would prove effective for that student. However, he also believed that there was motivation for students not to cheat, particularly when they were engaging in activities that they valued. In summary students in the "Do What is Expected" group believed that other students would consider their circumstance and might cheat depending on the situations.

Similar to their peers in the other two groups, students in students in the "Do What is Expected" group generally had a positive attitude toward the honor code with the exception of Ethan. The students did not condone academic dishonesty but were reluctant

to report academic dishonesty if they observed it. Students had a good understanding of the honor code and what behavior was prohibited by the honor code. Although they believed that the consequences were severe for those students who were found responsible for violating the honor code they did not believe that the honor code made a difference in student behavior. Just as their peers in the other two groups, students in the "Do What is Expected" group believed that students rarely considered the honor pledge when deciding whether or not to commit academic dishonesty.

Students in this group, like those in the "Common Sense," also believed that faculty behavior impacted students' decisions regarding academic dishonesty and their attitudes toward the honor code. Specifically, they believed that if faculty members and students formed a strong relationship, then students would be less likely to cheat in order to maintain that relationship. They also believed that if faculty set clear expectations and discussed the importance of the honor code, students would be less likely to commit academic dishonesty because they desired to uphold the expectations set by the faculty. Both of these reasons are characteristic of individuals in the Conventional level of moral development which Kohlberg (1976) characterized as individuals who seek the approval of others and who may judge the morality of an action based on the consequences an action may have on a person's relationship with others.

Group C – "It's All About the Consequences"

Results of the DIT2 indicated that the P-scores of students in group C had the lowest P-scores of the students in the qualitative sample. They were placed in the group labeled "low" for the purposes of this study. Results of the DIT2 showed that students in this group received scores that were much lower than the mean of 42.3 which was

reported by Rest (1994) as the mean score of college students in his study. The mean P-score score of students in this group was 13.2. Their scores on the DIT2 indicated that students in group C tended to fall into stages 1 and 2 of Kohlberg's (1976) Theory of Moral Development which he identified as the Preconventional level. Specifically, the Preconventional level of moral reasoning is characterized by a strong sense of personal welfare where individuals are concerned with whether their behavior is considered by others to be good or bad (Kohlberg, 1979).

Table 4.5 represents an overview of the demographics of the 5 students in group C.

Table 4.5. Group C Participant Demographics

Name	Sex	Age	Race	Religion	Year in School/Major	Activities	P-score
Nakia	female	18	African-American	Methodist	Freshman/ Government and Politics	African Students Association Knitting Club Works on Campus	10
Kelly	female	20	Caucasian	Baptist	Freshman/ Biology	Gymnastics honors Program	16
Leslie	female	21	Black-American	Christian	Junior/ Journalism	Editor and Chief of a newspaper Yearbook staff	18
Michael	male	18	Caucasian	Catholic	Freshman/ Math	None	18
Akira	male	20	Japanese	Buddhist	Sophomore/ Kinesiology	Intramural sports	4

Nakia was a first–year student majoring in Government and Politics. She identified as African-American. She received a great deal of exposure to the honor code through her classes and from her faculty members. She recalled signing the honor scroll during orientation at the University. She said she did not understand the importance of

the honor code or the honor pledge until she finally started classes in the fall semester. She believed that the purpose of the honor code was to prevent cheating. Nakia believed that faculty behavior influenced students' decisions regarding academic integrity.

Kelly was a sophomore majoring in Biology. She found her studies to be challenging and put forth a great deal of effort in order to do well. She described herself as a dedicated student who did not approve of cheating. She was familiar with the honor code and believed that she received her values from her parents, her church and her upbringing. She equated the honor code with the honor pledge and believed that it was important to sign the honor pledge if she was asked to do so.

Leslie was a junior majoring in Journalism. She took her studies very seriously and said that her academic college had framed many of her attitudes toward academic integrity. She said academic integrity was strongly emphasized in her journalism classes. "Journalism is based on truth…so it's kind of understood that you're not supposed to fabricate, make-up quotes, make people up, make-up story details….we don't even have to talk about the honor code in Journalism because it's understood." She first learned about the honor code in orientation when she signed the honor scroll.

Michael was a freshman, majoring in Math. Michael attended a private, Catholic high school. Michael said he did not think much about the honor code or even the honor pledge when he signed it because "I'm not planning on cheating." He equated the honor code with the honor pledge and recalled signing the honor scroll at orientation. Michael believed that students who were going to cheat would do so regardless of whether or not they signed the honor pledge. He said he was not concerned with what happened to other

students because he was more concerned with how well he did in school and how honest he was.

Akira was a sophomore, Kinesiology major. He believed that the University really stressed integrity and that the University had no tolerance toward academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism. He said his friends had a high level of integrity and were "really into school" and they were "the hard work ethic type." He said that he, and especially his friends, did not want to "do anything stupid or risk their school career…by being caught cheating." Akira believed that the pledge served as a reminder to students not to cheat and affirmed "all the work you've done is yours and you didn't get any unauthorized help."

Students in this group received the lowest P-scores and N2 scores on the DIT2 out of the 3 groups of students in the study. Their scores on the DIT2 indicate that students in this group tend to reason in stages 1 and 2 which Kohlberg (1976) identified as Preconventional level. Individuals in this level are largely concerned with punishment in these two stages and typically behave in socially acceptable ways to avoid punishment. In other words, for students in group C, they focused largely on the consequences of committing academic dishonesty.

Through the interview process, students confirmed that their level of moral reasoning was consistent with Kohlberg's characterization. Like students in the "Common Sense" group and the "Do What is Expected" group, students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group generally held a positive attitude toward the honor code and did not condone academic dishonesty. Students believed that the honor code was necessary so that other students did not cheat. They were generally familiar with the

honor code and aspects of the honor code including prohibited behavior and the honor pledge. Much of what they learned about the honor code was learned in orientation and was reiterated throughout their time at the University. Signing the honor scroll during orientation had more impact on this group of students than any other group in the study.

They believed that the honor code served as a reminder so that other students did not cheat. Despite their belief that the intended purpose of the honor code was to remind students not to cheat, students in this group, just as students in the "Common Sense" group, did not believe that the honor code made a significant difference in the behavior of most students. Like students in the "Common Sense" group, they believed that other factors such as faculty behavior impacted students' decisions regarding academic dishonesty and their attitudes toward the honor code.

Students' reasoning about peer reporting and cheating was consistent with students at the Preconventional level. Specifically, students in this group were very reluctant to report their peers because they do not want to get them "in trouble." Students in this group believed that other students cheated because they were highly focused on grades.

Meaning Students Made of the Honor Code

The honor code was necessary so students would not cheat. Students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group believed that the honor code was necessary so that students would not cheat. The meaning they made of the honor code was based on the honor code as a set of rules. They defined right behavior, in this case following the honor code, by what was in their own best interest. Leslie believed that the honor code existed in response to a serious problem with cheating at the University. She said when she

arrived on campus she was introduced to the honor code at orientation. She believed that the University increased its efforts to educate students about academic dishonesty in response to a cheating "crisis." "I would imagine that there had been some extreme cases where either cheating or something like that happened because when I first got here, it (the honor code) was a really big deal."

Nakia believed that the honor code existed because without the honor code, students would cheat. The honor code states what behavior is prohibited so that students cannot later claim that were not told what was expected of them regarding their academic work. Nakia said, "If students aren't given explicit (rules) saying if you do this, you will fail, they will cheat. Without it (the honor code) a lot of people will say "you didn't tell us we couldn't do this (cheat)," so some students need it, so they won't cheat."

Akira agreed that the honor code ensured that students knew what was expected of them so they could follow the rules. He also believed that the honor code existed because the University did not want to "blemish their image." Akira's reasoning seemed to be consistent with individuals at lower levels of moral reasoning who were concerned with negative outcomes and punishments associated with behavior (Kohlberg, 1976). He believed that the reason that the University employed an honor code was to make sure that the reputation of the University remained positive to external constituents. Akira believed that if students cheated, the University would suffer because prospective students as well as employers and people external to the university would believe that cheating was tolerated at the University. He said that the University's "image would be tarnished" if they (the University) tolerate cheating. Therefore, the honor code was a

message to students and to external constituents that the University did not tolerate cheating.

Kelly believed that the honor code existed so that students knew and understood that the University would not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty. Kelly believed that it was the University's responsibility to inform students that academic dishonesty was prohibited. She believed that if students were not informed that specific behaviors were prohibited they may not behave according to the rules of the University. If a student encountered a problem or if a student was accused of academic dishonesty, the honor code helped that student to know what his/her rights were. She said, "it shows you what your rights are and if there are problems in the future, you can't argue or anything, it's written right there." She added, "you know what you've got to do; you've got to follow this (the honor code) and they're (the University) not going to tolerate any breaking of any of these laws." Kelly's understanding of the meaning of the honor code was to clearly state the rules and the consequences for breaking the rules of academic integrity. Therefore, if students committed academic dishonesty there could be no disagreement between the student and the faculty member over what is considered "right" and what is considered "wrong" because it is written in the honor code. Kelly's reasoning was indicative of individuals in the Preconventional level of moral reasoning because she was concerned with the honor code as a set of rules and the consequences of violating those rules. Kohlberg (1976) described this reasoning as being characteristic of individuals at lower levels of moral reasoning.

Michael's level of moral reasoning and belief about the meaning of honor code were consistent with his peers in this group. He also believed that the honor code existed

so that the University "can take action" against students who commit academic dishonesty. He believed the purpose of the honor pledge was so that the university could enforce the honor code more fully and impose sanctions to students who violated the honor code. He said, "If a student gets caught cheating, they can be told (by the University) that you signed the pledge and said you weren't going to cheat, so we (the University) can take whatever actions that's necessary."

Kohlberg described individuals in the Preconventional level as being concerned with whether their behavior is considered by others to be "good" or "bad" (Kohlberg, 1976). Individuals in the Preconventional level are also largely concerned with punishment and typically behave in socially acceptable ways in order to avoid punishment (Kohlberg, 1976). The meaning that students in the "It's all About the Consequences" group made of the honor code was consistent with their level of moral reasoning as defined by Kohlberg. Specifically, students in the group tended to be very concerned with the rules and the consequences for breaking the rules. Their view of the honor code was that the rules set forth in the honor code were necessary so that students would not cheat. Students in this group believed that the purpose of the honor code was to remind students not to cheat. They believed that the honor code, and especially the honor pledge, served as a reminder to students, not to cheat. Michael said that the purpose of the pledge is "to remind them (students) not to cheat."   Nakia said that the purpose of the honor code was "to prevent cheating and to like remind them (students) not to cheat." For Leslie, the purpose of having an honor code was more about the consequences than anything else. She believed that the purpose of the honor code was to "get students to think about the fact that there will be severe and dire consequences if they are caught

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cheating." She said "I wouldn't try it (cheating) because I would fear failing and getting an "X" on my transcript!"

Students' view of the honor code was indicative of their level of moral reasoning because the honor code reminded students of the rules and the consequences for cheating. Individuals in the Preconventional level were largely concerned with avoiding punishment. Therefore, they believed that the meaning and the purpose of the honor code was to help students behave appropriately and remind students that cheating was prohibited and that there were strict consequences for engaging in prohibited behaviors.

Impact of orientation. Four of the five students in this group talked about or recalled signing the honor pledge scroll during their orientation at the University. Beginning in Summer 2003 students have participated in signing a forty five-foot banner with the honor pledge written on it. Students signed the honor pledge scroll with their orientation group and listened to a short presentation about the honor code given by a member of the student honor council.

Leslie's recollection of signing the honor pledge scroll was her first exposure to the honor pledge.

> We had to go into McKeldin (Library) and I think we stopped in what is now the area of Footnotes Café but there weren't any chairs in there at the time, so that's where we had to go and sign the scroll. I don't know what they did with it. I would imagine that there had been some extreme cases where either cheating or something like that because when I first got here, it was like a really big deal. And the girl who presented it to us – I don't remember her name and she's probably graduated by now – but I remember she was also an RA, but she was

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really serious about it because she was also on the judicial board and everything was just a really big deal to her. (Leslie)

The message that Leslie took away from this experience was that the honor code and the honor pledge were taken seriously by both students and faculty. Leslie believed that the honor pledge was in place to try to combat earlier incidences of significant cheating.

Although the other students did not recall signing the scroll as vividly as Leslie, they did remember signing their name on the honor scroll and recalled learning about the honor code and the penalties for violating the honor code. Nakia said she signed the honor scroll at orientation and recalled "they talked about the honor code and the penalty (for cheating)." She said "I signed it (the honor scroll) because they said to do it." Nakia explained that she did not fully understand the importance of the honor code until she started taking classes and what she learned during orientation was reinforced.

Samantha said she thought that signing the honor code was "very interesting." She attended a high school with an honor code and was familiar with the strict consequences for cheating in high school even though did not participate in signing an honor pledge scroll in high school. She recalled observing the honor pledge scroll hanging in the dining hall on campus after all of the students signed the scroll during orientation. She said "They actually put it up at the Diner on north campus just to show us all again." Samantha believed that the purpose of hanging the honor pledge scroll in the dining hall after Orientation reminded students to uphold the honor code.

Signing the honor scroll at orientation had a more significant impact on students in group B than students in any of the other two groups. It was their first introduction to

the honor code and to the honor pledge. But perhaps more importantly, it was the first time that they had been introduced to the policies and the expectations outlined in the *Code of Academic Integrity*. This is very indicative of individuals at the Preconventional level of moral reasoning who view the honor code as a set of rules and who are concerned with the potential consequences of violating the *Code of Academic Integrity*. For students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group, signing the honor scroll impacted how seriously they viewed the honor code because it represented the University's efforts to communicate the importance of academic integrity as well as the expectations and the consequences for violating the honor code.

Attitudes Toward the Honor Code

Students' attitudes toward the honor code did not change as a result of their enrollment at the university. Students in this group generally shared a positive or a neutral attitude toward the honor code. Despite their exposure to the honor code, none of the students in this group experienced a change in their attitude toward the honor code as a result of being enrolled at the University. They reported frequent and early exposure to the honor code, yet did not experience a change in their attitude toward the honor code nor did they expect to experience a change in attitude.   Kelly said, "I think that it's (her attitude) pretty much just remained the same." Kelly attended a private religiously affiliated school and took her work very seriously. She explained that for her she had a positive attitude toward the honor code since she began as a student at the University. Leslie, one of two students who attended a high school with an honor code, agreed with Kelly. She said that she did not give the honor code much thought prior to participating in the study. "It's just always been something that's been there but didn't really affect

me because I wouldn't consider doing anything in violation of it." Akira's response was simply that "the honor code itself hasn't changed, so there isn't really a different perspective for me to take."

However, Nakia said that when she first heard about the honor code and the honor pledge it did not seem to matter much. When she finally went to classes things changed. She said, "When I finally went into classes, I understood the importance of it, but during the orientation, it's just a big thing to sign." Nakia realized after she started attending classes that the honor code was important. She said that the honor code was discussed in all of her classes and she was asked to sign the honor pledge frequently.

For students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group, the honor code was a set of rules and consequences. Since the honor code had not changed, their attitude toward the honor code had remained largely the same. They understood the honor code was a set of guidelines and standards of behavior and they were expected to follow it. They did not experience a change in attitude either negatively or favorable toward the honor code as a result of their enrollment as did some of the students in the "Common Sense group and the "Do What is Expected" group.

Honor code did not make a significant difference in most students' behavior. Similar to students in the other two groups, students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group did not believe that the honor code affected other students' decision whether to commit academic dishonesty. Generally, they believed that students thought about the punishment if they were caught cheating, but for most students who were motivated to act dishonestly, the honor code was not a deterrent. Michael said, "I think most people that are going to cheat are going to cheat regardless, so I don't think

there's going to be that much affect. I think it really depends on the way you're brought up." Michael also said that the honor code did not make a difference for him because "I'm not really planning on cheating."

Nakia said that "maybe" the honor code made a difference for other students. She believed that the strict sanctions associated with the honor code were what mattered to most students. This was very indicative of Nakia's level of moral reasoning. She tended to think of the honor code in terms of the consequences that were associated with violating the honor code. She said the "punishment is a main reason when they're deciding. I think the punishments are harsh. If the honor code was there without the punishment, there would be more students committing academic dishonesty." Nakia believed that if students were already accustomed to cheating, the honor code would not make a difference. Nakia's reasoning was characteristic of individuals in the Preconventional level of moral development who were largely concerned with avoiding punishment (Kohlberg , 1976). She believed that the punishments for committing academic dishonesty were what deterred students from violating the honor code.

Leslie said that she did not believe that students considered the honor code when they were deciding to commit academic dishonesty, "especially if there's not a good chance of them getting caught." Leslie also believed that some students would still sign the honor pledge even if they cheated. For "minor" violations such as "glancing over at somebody's multiple-choice quiz during an exam" she thought that students would still sign the pledge. Although Leslie did not describe how she differentiated between "minor" and "major" cheating violations, her comments indicated that she believed there was a difference in the degree of severity among honor code violations.

The honor code did not make a difference for Leslie when she thought about cheating. "For people like me, not to sound holier than thou, but we have a pretty moral view of things anyway, I don't really think it's necessary to sign it per se." Kelly agreed with Nakia. She said that the honor code did not make a difference for her personally. She said, "You shouldn't have to consider it (the honor code), it just depends on the person mostly, like their conscience kind of tells them if it's wrong or if it's right."

Students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group believed that the honor code itself did not make a difference in students' behavior. They tended to focus on the consequences to those who cheated. Although they did not immediately recognize the specific consequences stated in the *Code of Academic Integrity*, students in this group were clearly aware that students would suffer consequences if they violated the honor code. They believed that the fear of consequences was what motivated students to adhere to the honor code.

Students did not want to get their peers in trouble. Like students in the other two group, students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group agreed that they would not commit academic dishonesty and generally did not approve of others cheating. Also, like students in group A, they were reluctant to report other students to the honor council even if they observed academic dishonesty among their peers. If students believed that others cheating affected them directly, they were more likely to confront the student directly or do nothing, rather than report the student to the faculty or to the honor council.

I'd think of that as more like their personal issues, but something I don't want to get involved in. Unless it's something that affects me, if they took my answers and then represented it as their own, then I'd probably take action for it. Yeah,

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maybe I would and just ask them if they actually did that. And if they admit to it

or deny, I would do something about it. (Akira)

Although Akira said he would "do something" about another student's cheating, when

asked what he would do, he said he would ask the student if they were actually cheating.

He had not thought through what his next step would be if the student either admitted or

denied cheating. It appears that Akira was reluctant to report his peers because it is not

socially acceptable among peers to report one another to the faculty. Akira is concerned

if other students' behavior directly affects him, yet he does not want to be responsible for

getting his peers "in trouble." Akira's behavior was characteristic of individuals in the

Preconventional level of moral reasoning. He was more concerned with himself and the

consequences that directly affect him if another students than with anything else.

Individuals in the Preconventional level have a strong sense of personal welfare, tend to

be egocentric and are concerned with their own interests (Kohlberg, 1976). Therefore, it

was characteristic for individuals in group B to be more concerned with other students'

behavior when they were directly affected by it.

Students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group, like those in the other

two groups, shared the sentiment that they did not want to get involved if a peer was

cheating. All of the students in this group said their rationale for not reporting their peers

was because they did not want to get anyone "in trouble."   Michael said he is "not really

concerned with what happens to other people. I'm more concerned about how well I do

and how honest I am about stuff. I would just try to stay out of it probably because I

wouldn't want to get someone in trouble for something I wasn't even sure about." Like

Akira, Michael is more concerned about his personal welfare than the behavior of other

students which according to Kohlberg is characteristic of individuals in the Preconventional level or moral development who are more concerned with their own personal welfare versus what is considered best for the larger community.

Kelly seemed to think that she was required to report academic dishonesty especially if it was "serious." Ultimately she concluded that she could not bring herself to report another student.

> If it was something really severe I guess like if they copied like a whole paper or just I don't know. I guess I just never encountered it, so I wouldn't really know. I know you're supposed to, but I don't think I would. I know that's sad, but I'd feel awkward just doing it. (Kelly)

Leslie reasoned that she did not compare her grades or her abilities to other students, so it did not make a difference to her whether or not students cheated. She said she was more concerned with making sure that she upheld her own standards of behavior and that she was learning and achieving the grades that she thought she could earn rather than comparing her grades to those earned by other students. Therefore, it would be unnecessary for her to report another student for cheating. She said, "I'm not really putting myself against others, I usually grade myself against my own standards." Although she rationalized why it was unnecessary for her to report her peers, she ultimately determined that she did not want to report others because she did not want to be responsible for getting another student in trouble. She said, "I'm not a snitch" and "I figure if they're bold enough to cheat, then I'm probably not the only one who saw. So, I guess I'm passing the responsibility onto somebody else." Leslie, like her peers in the "It's All About the Consequences" group, had a strong sense of personal welfare. She

was not concerned about the behavior of other students, which Kohlberg (1976) described as characteristic of individuals in the Preconventional level of moral development.

Nakia said that she was angered by others students' behavior. She said "It makes me mad because if they're not caught, they earn a better grade than me and I worked really hard for my grade. Despite her anger, she was reluctant to report cheaters and emphasized that she did not want to "get students in trouble."

> I wouldn't cheat, but I don't think I would like run and tell the professor just because I don't want that person to get, I don't know what their situation is. I don't want them to get in trouble. I'll just try my best to move away from them. I don't want to get them in trouble. (Nakia)

Instead of reporting students for committing academic dishonesty, Nakia was more likely to try to prevent a student from copying from her by moving her seat to ensure that students did not cheat off of her paper or exam.

Students in the Preconventional level of moral development were largely concerned with their own behavior rather than being concerned with the larger society. Similar to students in group A, they did not want to be responsible for the behavior of others and did not want to be the cause of getting other students "in trouble." Therefore, like students in the other two groups, they were unlikely to report their peers. According to Kohlberg (1976), this is indicative of individuals in stage 1 and 2 of moral development who are more concerned with their own interests.

Factors that Influence Student's attitudes and Behaviors

  Importance of peers, family and religion. Students in this group agreed that they developed their values from their parents, religious affiliations, and from their peers. These values are what prevented them from cheating more so than the honor code. For students in this group, peer behavior was particularly important in their own decision making around academic integrity. Michael said "The friends that you have and how they act" influence his decisions. Akira agreed that he adopted his values from his parents but he looked to his peers as well. However, he seemed to rationalize any possible cheating by his peers. He said "my friends…they have a high level of integrity. So, unless they're really far behind in their school work, I don't think there's any reason for them to cheat because they're just going to do honest work." Although Akira did not agree with the idea that it was more acceptable for students who were falling behind in their schoolwork to cheat, he seemed to rationalize this as more acceptable for his friends than for other students who cheated.

  Kelly said she learned her values regarding academic integrity from her parents and from her religious background.

   They (parents) had a really good impact, teachers really stress it (honesty) in high

   school especially and, again, I think you know it from the start and they enforced

   it (my parents). It's (the honor code) a lot like my values within the family and

   like church. (Kelly)

For Kelly, the important values that she learned from her parents closely parallel the values that are implied in the honor code.

Faculty role. Just as those students in the other two groups, for most students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group faculty behavior seemed to make a difference in student behavior. If faculty members discussed the honor code and made it clear that academic dishonesty would not be tolerated, then students believed that all students were less likely to commit academic dishonesty. Akira said, "If the professor started off at one point initially saying, look I'm not going tolerate it (cheating) and sets a standard and tone for it, then the students are going to take it seriously." However, Akira also believed "if the professor is just really lackadaisical about it then that's just going to give the students an opportunity to try to see how much tolerance level the professor has over this (cheating)."

Nakia agreed that "when the teachers discuss it (the honor code) that helps students abide by the honor code and when they individualize it or talk about how it will help you in the future" students are less likely to cheat. Michael believed that the relationship that students had with their professors also made a difference "because if they like their professor, they feel like they're disappointing them if they cheat."

Students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group wanted to gain the approval of their faculty members. They said they believed that students were less likely to cheat if they formed a relationship with their faculty members. Students recognized that cheating would potentially damage a positive relationship with their faculty and therefore students chose not to cheat when they had a positive relationship with their faculty members. Although students in this group tended to reason in the Preconventional level of moral development, their reasoning indicated that perhaps they are moving toward the Conventional level of moral development. According to Kohlberg,

individuals in the Conventional level, particularly those in stage three may judge the morality of an action based on the consequences an action may have on a person's relationship with others. Therefore, students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group believed that students may choose not to cheat in order to maintain a positive relationship with their faculty members.

However, for Leslie, it was more than just the behavior of a particular faculty member that mattered. As a Journalism major at the University, there was a clear message from the College of Journalism that academic dishonesty would not be tolerated.

> I know in journalism school they're like "we're not even dealing with the judicial board." As soon as they find out, they're going to expel you… In Journalism I think it's based on truth anyway, so it's kind of understood that you're not supposed to fabricate, make up quotes, make up people, make up story details, so that's a whole different thing, like we don't even have to talk about the honor code in the Journalism school because it's understood. We have to take an ethics course anyway all about honesty and then it comes up in all your other classes, too. So, I think that's probably why it hasn't really been an issue in my college experience because I am a Journalism major. (Leslie)

Leslie believed that honesty was stressed in the College of Journalism because honesty is a core value of Journalism as a profession. Leslie had been given very clear expectations about academic integrity in her classes and from the college and she chose to follow the rules and abide by those expectations.

Akira agreed that professors really make a difference for students.

I think the honor code is just a written statement, so it all depends on how the

teacher enforces it. And if it's the way that the professor says that it impacts in a

manner that really if his students get the idea of saying well I shouldn't cheat at

all, then it's a matter of how you present the severity of the honor code, and it

could go either really bad or really good. (Akira)

For Akira the instructor's behavior was what mattered to students. Without the support

of faculty, the honor code would not matter much to students. Akira believed that faculty

are responsible to inform students about the expectations set forth in the honor code as

well as enforce the honor code. He believed that if faculty members did not hold students

who cheated accountable, the honor code would have little impact on student behavior.

He believed that students were concerned with the consequences of violating the honor

code and if faculty members did not report students for academic dishonesty or impose

penalties for students who cheated, more students would likely cheat.

Students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group, like students in the

other two group believed that faculty behavior impacted students' decisions regarding

academic integrity. They believed that if faculty members enforced the honor code then

there would be consequences for students who violated the honor code. This seemed to

be true for all of the students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group which is

indicative of individuals at the Preconventional level of moral development who tend to

be largely concerned with the consequences of their behavior. They also believed that

the relationship that students had with faculty members also deterred students from

committing academic dishonesty. Many of the students in this group, seemed to be

moving toward the Conventional level of moral reasoning because they were concerned

with their relationship with their faculty and would be less likely to cheat because of their relationship with faculty.

Attitudes Toward Cheating

    Cheating can be justified. Students in this group shared a strong sentiment that cheating was wrong but accepted the fact that cheating occurred in college. Some students were angered by others cheating despite the fact that they were unwilling to report cheating when they observed it. They believed that there was rarely a good reason to cheat but some students believed there were better and worse reasons to cheat. For example, Nakia believed that students may cheat to improve their grade. This seemed to be an acceptable reason to cheat as long as students were working hard. Nakia said, "There's never a good reason to commit academic dishonesty. Okay, better reasons maybe like the desperation one - if they're working hard and they're still not getting the grades they like and maybe because they're trying or they tried hard, so I think that's a better reason." However, Nakia was surprised at the amount of academic dishonesty that occurred because "the punishment is so harsh." For Nakia, punishment was a significant deterrent. She said, "I wouldn't try it (cheating) because I would fear failing and getting an 'XF' on my transcript." Nakia's response is typical of students at a lower level of moral reasoning such as stages 1 and 2 who are motivated to avoid negative consequences of cheating.

    Michael said that he believed "a lot of people cheat." Although he said he did not personally know anyone who cheated, he believed that cheating in general was prevalent. He said, "I don't really know anyone who cheats specifically, but, in general, across the nation I can see it (cheating)." Specifically, Michael heard about cheating

incidents in the media and heard from his professors that cheating was prevalent in some

classes. Despite the amount of cheating he believed existed, Michael said that he would

not cheat because "I'm more worried about learning the skills that I need later in life than

just getting a good grade."

Leslie believed that cheating was more or less "human nature." "I guess it's

human nature. People will do anything they can get away with, especially if it's for their

own good." Leslie said that she has been tempted to cheat because of the nature of some

of the assignments she has had to complete during her academic career. Although she

said she was tempted, she said she had not cheated and would not cheat, yet she

understood why some students engaged in cheating. She said that she had taken classes

in her major in which it was difficult for her to earn a good grade. Therefore, she

believed others students may be tempted as well.

> On trivial stuff, like in Journalism 100, we had to have news quizzes every time
> but the news quizzes were really, really hard. Even the faculty said they were
> hard. And they started making the TA make them (quizzes) easier because like we
> would read a story about a protest or something and then the instructor would ask
> exactly how many people were at the rally according to the Washington Post
> article, knowing it would generally like 10 to 20,000 and knowing it would be like
> down to the third place kind of thing, so in situations like that (cheating might be
> tempting). (Leslie)

Leslie explained that she could empathize with some students who cheated because she

has had to complete assignments as a Journalism student that she found difficult to

complete and to earn a good grade because they required detailed and accurate responses.

She found this challenging because the answer was either wrong or right and no partial credit was given. However, in the end, she chose to do what was right and not cheat. Leslie's reasoning was indicative of individuals at lower levels of moral reasoning who tended to behave in socially acceptable ways to avoid punishment. Leslie, like other students in this group, accepted that other students cheated but she was clearly motivated to avoid cheating themselves because of the consequences of cheating.

Grades matter. Students in this group tended to focus on grades as a significant reason why students chose to cheat or not. They saw grades as a reward for hard work and good performance and they believed they were entitled to good grades because of their hard work. They believed that some students may have cheated because they were performing poorly. Others did not have the motivation to complete the work that was required in class but desired good grades and believed that cheating may have helped their grades. Leslie believed that cheating was sometimes easier than doing the work that was expected of a college student and the fact that grades were important.

> It's (cheating) easier (than working hard). Well, A because it's easier and B because there's a pressure to get good grades. It's really not even so much about what you're learning, it's about the grades you get. I've seen that first-hand when people will get really upset about the grades they got; they don't think they deserved what they got, etc., etc. and I've always had the mindset that whatever grade I get for the most part is what I've earned. So, unless I think something was really, really wrong, I probably wouldn't go to a teacher and question it. But for people whose focus is on grades and getting good grades…I'm pretty sure they would be willing to do anything to get that grade. (Leslie)

Leslie believed that because grades were so important to students, they were willing to do anything, including cheat, to get better grades or to maintain their grade point average. Leslie's reasoning was indicative of individuals in the Preconventional level of moral development who are concerned with their own self interests (Kohlberg, 1981). Specifically Leslie seemed to view grades as a reward for doing the right thing (i.e. going to class, studying etc.). She believed that other students may have felt that they were entitled to good grades if they worked hard enough and may have been tempted to cheat if they believed they could not achieve good grades without cheating. Kohlberg (1981) also posited that individuals in the Preconventional level, particularly those in stage 2 will likely conform to the rules when they are rewarded for doing so. Therefore, it is likely that individuals in group B would be less likely to cheat if they were rewarded for their hard work and the effort they put into their academics.

Leslie also believed that students who chose not to cheat did so because they feared the consequences. So for some students, cheating was just not worth it because of the consequences. Leslie explained that some students did not believe that cheating was right or ethical.

> I would imagine if there are some people who really do want to stay within the law just for altruistic reasons, but I think the majority of people who don't cheat or who say they don't cheat only do it because they don't want that XF or they don't want to get expelled. (Leslie)

According to Leslie, since the normal consequence for committing academic dishonesty is a grade of "XF," which is averaged into student's grade point average the same as a

grade of "F" students may have not cheat because they feared the consequence of failing the class.

Michael agreed that some students were just looking for "the easy way out." He believed that students did not understand the importance of earning their education without cheating and instead focused on their grades. He said, "A lot of kids probably don't realize how important their future might be or they just think their parents want them to get good grades so they'll do whatever they have to or maybe find the easy way out." Michael believed that students who attended college for the grades and did not want to complete the work necessary to earn grades honestly may have cheated more frequently. Michael's reasoning was consistent with Leslie's. The focus that students in group B placed on grades is characteristic of individuals in the Preconventional level of moral reasoning who were concerned with their personal welfare (Kohlberg). If they viewed getting good grades as positive, then they may be more likely to cheat to earn or keep their grades.

Students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group had the lowest mean P-score of all the three groups. Students generally had a positive or neutral attitude toward the honor code. Although no one admitted to committing academic dishonesty, they understood that cheating occurred in college and in society. Students learned about the honor code early in their tenure at the university, usually in orientation. Like their peers in the other two groups, students were reluctant to report their peers for violating the honor code. Specifically, they feared getting their peers "in trouble." They also believed, as did students in the "Common Sense" group and the "Do What is Expected" group, that

faculty's behavior impacted students' attitudes and behaviors regarding academic dishonesty.

Their DIT2 scores indicated that students tended to reason in the Preconventional level of moral development (Kohlberg, 1976). Kohlberg (1976) characterized individuals in this level as having a strong sense of personal welfare. In other words, they are more concerned with their own well being than the behavior of others. Students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group adhered to the honor code because of the consequences or punishments associated with violating the *Code of Academic Integrity*. They also tended to be concerned with the behavior of other students when that behavior directly affected them. Specifically, they were more upset with other students cheating behavior when it negatively affected their grade. Similarly students in this group did not want to report other students because they did not want to get other students "in trouble." They were focused on consequences of their peer's behavior versus the negative behavior of cheating. Perhaps these students were also moving toward the Conventional level of moral development where individuals typically demonstrate a concern for others (Kohlberg, 1976). This was evidenced by their reluctant to report their peers for academic dishonesty and their concern over maintaining peer approval. They also feared being branded by their peers as a "snitch" or "nark." This behavior is indicative of the level of moral reasoning because they were concerned with how reporting others would negatively affect them, perhaps by making them uncomfortable and unpopular with their peers. Furthermore, like students in the other two groups, students in the "It's All About the Consequences" discussed their desire to maintain a positive relationship with their

faculty members and avoid damaging those relationships by engaging in academic dishonesty.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the data collection and data analysis from the DIT2, and the themes that emerged from the qualitative data. Results of the quantitative data analysis showed that students in the sample were at various levels of moral reasoning. Data from the individual interviews illustrated that students understood the honor code in various ways including how they made meaning of the honor code, how they interpreted the honor code, and their attitudes towards the honor code. Students' attitudes toward cheating also emerged as a result of the analysis of the interviews with students.

Students in the "Common Sense" group had the highest scores on the DIT2. Their scores indicated that they used a high level of Principled moral reasoning when making decisions. Through the interview process, students in the "Common Sense" group confirmed that their understanding of the honor code was consistent with Kohlberg's (1976) characterization of individuals in stages 5 and 6 of moral development. Specifically, students in this group believed that the honor code was common sense and therefore, did not differentiate between the honor code and the honor pledge. Although students in the "Common Sense" group did not believe that the honor code affected their decision to uphold academic integrity, they supported the values and principles of the honor code. Students in this group believed that factors such as their personal experiences, upbringing, and faculty affected student behavior. However, students in the "Common Sense" group, like students in the other two groups, were

reluctant to report their peers for academic dishonesty. Although their moral reasoning

scores indicate that students in this group tended to reason at the principled level or moral

reasoning their reluctance to report their peers is more characteristic of individuals in the

Conventional level of moral development who are more concerned with their relationship

with peers. It is important to remember that these college age students are likely

concerned with maintaining friendships and avoiding "tattling" on their peers. They may

also fear being socially ostracized by peers who view them as "narks" or "snitches."

Students in the "Do What is Expected" group tended to reason in stages 3 and 4

which Kohlberg (1976) identified as the Conventional level of moral reasoning.

According to Kohlberg (1976) individuals in this level have learned that conforming and

living up to the expectations of others is beneficial. Individuals in the Conventional level

also tend to seek the approval of others. Through the interview process, students in this

group confirmed Kohlberg's characterization of individuals in the Conventional level.

Specifically, students in the "Do What is Expected" group were reluctant to report their

peers yet, at the same time, valued their relationship with their instructors. Students had a

positive attitude toward the honor code and understood what specific behaviors were

prohibited by the honor code. Students desire to uphold the honor code was rooted in

their desire to behave in a socially acceptable way. Students in this group were, not

unlike students in the other two groups, reluctant to report their peers for academic

dishonesty. They had difficulty reporting their peers and were unlikely to do so because

they feared jeopardizing their own image and relationship with their peers. Although

students did not condone academic dishonesty, they tended to be concerned with others

cheating only when it directly impacted their grade or when they could possibly be suspected of wrong doing.

Finally students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group had the lowest scores on the DIT2 as they relate to principled moral reasoning. Through the interview process, students in this group confirmed that their understanding of the honor code was consistent with Kohlberg's (1976) characterization of individuals in stages 1 and 2 of moral development. Specifically, students in this group had a strong sense of personal welfare and were largely concerned with avoiding punishment which is characteristic of individuals in the Preconventional level or moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1976). Although participants in all three groups were concerned with the consequences and punishments associated with cheating, "It's All About the Consequences" group placed a particularly strong emphasis on avoiding cheating because of the punishments. Like students in the other two groups, students in this group held a positive attitude toward the honor code and believed that it was necessary so that other students would not cheat. Generally, they were familiar with the honor code including behavior that was prohibited by the honor code. Signing the honor scroll during their orientation had a significant impact on their understanding of the honor code because it was their introduction to the honor code as a set of rules. However, students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group, just as students in the other two, believed that students rarely considered the fact that the University had an honor code when they were deciding whether or not to cheat. They believed that students were much more likely to consider whether or not they would get caught and what the consequences would be if they were caught. Students in this group agreed with students in the "Common Sense" group and the "Do What is Expected"

group that faculty impacted student behavior regarding academic integrity. Specifically, they believed that when faculty discussed the honor code and made it clear to students that academic dishonesty would not be tolerated, students would be less likely to cheat. They also believed that the relationship that students have with their professor makes a difference because if students had a positive relationship with their faculty members they did not want to disappoint them by cheating.

In summary, students in all three groups generally had a favorable attitude toward the honor code and a negative attitude toward cheating. Analysis of the interview data in this study indicated that students at the University of Maryland understood the honor code in various ways depending on their level of moral reasoning. Chapter 5 will discuss the major findings as well as the implications to theory and practice.

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION

This study explored how undergraduate students' moral reasoning related to their understanding of the honor code at the University of Maryland.   The previous chapter described the findings of the study that emerged from the analysis of the Defining Issues Test, version two (DIT2) and qualitative interviews with 15 students from the University of Maryland. In this chapter, the major findings are discussed and connected to existing scholarship. Strengths, limitations, and implications of the study for theory and practice and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Major Findings

Defining Issues Test-version 2

In order to measure students' level of moral reasoning, the Defining Issues Test, version two (DIT2) was administered to 400 students who resided in university housing during the 2005-2006 academic year. Results of the analysis of the data from the DIT2 showed that students in the sample obtained P-scores that were consistent with the results of thousands of studies that have used the DIT and the DIT2 to measure students' levels of moral reasoning. Upon examining the P-scores and the N2 scores of the 274 students in the final sample, results showed the mean P-score of the sample was 35.54 with a mean N2 score of 34.52.   According to Kohlberg's (1976) Theory of Moral Development, the mean P-score for the sample is typical of most adolescents and adults. These results were consistent with the results reported by Bebeau and Thoma (2003) who reported a mean P-score of 34.30 and a mean N2 score of 32.94 for college level students. The scores reported by Bebeau and Thoma were derived from nearly 11,000

students nationwide, based on data collected at the Center for the Study of Ethical Development in an attempt to generate normative information for the DIT2.

Analysis of the data for this study also showed that there was not a statistically significant difference in the mean P-scores of men and women in the sample. These results were also consistent with findings reported by Bebeau and Thoma who reported that there were modest, but not statistically significant, differences in DIT2 scores between males and females in the data collected at the Center for the Study of Ethical Development.

No statistically significant difference in the mean P-scores was found among students in this study based on their year in school. However, there was enough variation in the P-scores of the total sample to separate students into three groups based on their mean P-scores. To separate students from the total sample into the three groups (high, medium, low) for the qualitative sample, the primary researcher viewed the P-scores and N2 scores of the sample. The students were grouped using cutoff points recommended by Rest (1990) to divide a distribution into groups for comparison purposes. The cutoff points recommended by Rest were slightly different than the cutoff points used in this study which provided greater differences in the P scores between the groups. The cutoffs used in this study fell within the rages recommended by rest but provided tighter, more distinct differences in order to maximize the difference in the P-scores to compare the groups. Rest (1990) "assigned P scores from 0 to 27 to the lowest third, from 28 to 41 to the middle third, and 42 and above to the highest third" (Turner, et al., 2002, p.307). As described in the previous chapter, students with the highest P-scores (greater than 56) in the sample were placed in one group, those who scored in the middle range (between 34

and 38) were placed in a second group and finally those who scored in the lowest range (between 4 and 20) were placed in a third group. After placing students in these three groups, students at the extreme ends of the range were selected to participate in qualitative interviews with five students from each of the groups were conducted for a total of 15 interviews.

Interviews

Results of the qualitative data analysis showed that despite the key differences discussed in chapter 4, there were several findings that were consistent across all groups of students in the study. This finding suggests that the students do not fit neatly into specific groups based on their level of moral reasoning. This finding is consistent with Rest's (1979) work who suggested that students may shift between stages of moral reasoning depending on the particular issues they are dealing with. For example, generally students in the study had a positive attitude toward the honor code and reported that they did not engage in academic dishonesty while in college. However, students in all three groups reported that they did not believe that the honor code directly impacted their behavior or the behavior of other students at the University. They believed that faculty behavior and peer behavior were more influential in their decisions regarding academic integrity than the honor code. Students in the study were reluctant to report their peers for academic dishonesty and many of the students focused on the importance of grades.

Favorable Attitudes

Students in all three groups generally had a favorable attitude toward the honor code. Whether students believed that the honor code was common sense like the students

in group A or whether they believed that the honor code was necessary to inform students of specific expectations and consequences such as those students in group B, participants seemed to expect that the University should govern the integrity of their academic work. The honor code was one way of doing so. Perhaps this is because students are used to authority figures governing their behavior throughout their schooling. Perhaps it is also true that students value honesty and integrity in themselves and expect their peers to do the same. According to McCabe (2005) many students that he surveyed were "troubled by the failure of their institution, and often its faculty, to address the issue of cheating." (p.26). The students in this study perhaps views the University's academic integrity policies as a way to prevent other students from gaining an unfair advantage over them and perhaps even help students to make more ethical decisions later in life to avoid what they considered "habitual cheating" that could be harmful to them and to society later on in life.

Students in the Study Reported that they Did Not Cheat

All of the students in the study said that they would not violate the *Code of Academic Integrity* by cheating. Although their reasons for not violating the honor code differed among the students, none of the participants admitted to cheating in college. This was surprising given the large numbers of students who admit to academic dishonesty nationwide. Although there was not consistency among all of the interviewees, most students were not surprised to learn that cheating was prevalent in college. This finding was consistent with those in other studies. For example, Baird (1980) found that 75 percent of students indicated that cheating was, "a normal part of life," (p.517) despite the fact that students believed it was morally wrong to do so.

Students in this study perceived that cheating occurred even if they had not witnessed it directly.

Honor Code Did Not Directly Impact Behavior

Despite their favorable attitude toward the honor code, most students in the study did not believe that the honor code directly impacted their own behavior or the behavior of other students. Some students, such as those in the "Common Sense" group, believed that students were already pre-disposed to cheating. Other participants believed that students weigh the consequences and risks of being caught when considering whether or not to commit academic dishonesty. Some students in the study did not believe that the honor code made a difference because they had no intention of cheating. For example, Michael said that the honor code did not matter because "I'm not really planning on cheating."

However, even though students said that the honor code did not directly impact behavior, at some level students must have believed that the honor code made a difference simply based on the way the participants in the study talked about the honor code. One student, Akira, said that a mandatory session on academic integrity and the honor code should be required for all incoming students to help reduce academic dishonesty. Furthermore, almost every student in the study talked about how faculty could help students uphold academic integrity and avoid cheating.

Faculty Behavior Mattered

Overwhelmingly, students in this study agreed that faculty behavior mattered significantly when it comes to academic integrity and to students knowing and understanding the honor code. If faculty members discussed academic dishonesty in the

classroom, set clear expectations with students, and held students accountable for cheating, students were less likely to cheat. One student, Akira, said it best when he said, "I think the honor code is just a written statement, so it all depends on how the teacher enforces it." This statement seemed to be true for participants at all levels of moral development in this study. Students believed that faculty must stress academic integrity in the classroom, place a statement on their syllabus about academic integrity, and ask students to write out and sign the honor pledge. This finding supports findings in other studies. For example, Hall and Kuh (1998) concluded from the findings in their study of honor codes at three universities, that honor codes are not effective without the support of faculty. It appeared that students want and expect faculty to enforce the honor code.

Peer Behavior Mattered

McCabe and Trevino (1993) observed that the most important predictor of cheating for an individual student is the behavior of his or her peer group. Students at the University of Maryland are not unique compared to students at other colleges and universities around the country. They believed that their behavior was consistent with the behavior of their friends regarding academic integrity. Several of the students in this study said that they and their friends did not engage in academic dishonesty. Akira described his friends as having strong work ethics and high levels of integrity. He said they would not cheat so he would not cheat either. Khari said that although he believed that students come to college already pre-disposed to cheating, he believed that students learn from their peer group. He said, "even if your parents tell you 'don't cheat,' and you're involved in a social network where cheating is o.k., you're going to pick it

(cheating) up as a habit." Khari believed that peers such as those in the same athletic organization and those in the same classes are likely to influence behavior.

Students were Reluctant to Report their Peers

Students at all levels of moral development were very reluctant, and in many cases, unwilling to report their peers for academic dishonesty. This was true for a variety of reasons. Some students, such as those in the " It's All About the Consequences" group feared getting other students "in trouble." Other students in the study did not feel that it was their responsibility to report their peers for academic dishonesty. They believed it was the responsibility of the faculty and administration to enforce the honor code. Ethan said, "I don't think it's my role to enforce the laws of the University." Since peer reporting is not required in the *Code of Academic Integrity*, students did not want to assume responsibility for reporting their peers because they did not see it as their role. Previous studies supported this finding. McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield (2001) found that peer reporting was more prevalent at schools with honor codes that required peer reporting. Although students had a responsibility to report at some code institutions, they were still reluctant to report their peers because they had developed negative feelings and associations with reporting their peers such as being ostracized by others (McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield). Students in this study expressed similar concerns of being known as a "nark" or a "snitch" and feared repercussions such as ostracism by their peers. Even students at higher levels of moral reasoning, where one might expect students to be more willing to report their peers, were reluctant to report others.

This finding was consistent with other studies. In one study, only 1% of students reported an incident of academic dishonesty even though university policy required them

to do so (Jendrik, 1992). McCabe, Trevino and Butterfield (2001) found that only 13.8% of students at schools without an honor code were willing to report another student for academic dishonesty. At institutions with an honor code, 43.4% of the students were willing to report their peers for academic dishonesty. However, in McCabe et.al's study most of the schools with honor codes required students to report their peers for academic dishonesty. As a modified honor code institution, students are not required to report their peers for academic dishonesty at the University of Maryland.

McCabe, Trevino and Butterfield (1999) found that students expressed significant concerns regarding peer reporting. Students were reluctant to report their peers due to fear of being responsible for repercussions (such as expulsion) to another student, fear that they were wrong about the peers behavior, fear of peer intimidation, and concern over ending friendships with a peer whom they reported. Students in this study expressed similar concerns. Many believed that unless other students' cheating directly impacted their grade, they would not report the incident.

Grades Mattered

Despite students varying levels of moral development, the students in this study placed a high emphasis on grades. This was most pronounced among students in group B (lowest group) but was apparent in all three of the groups. Students were more concerned with other students cheating when they believed their grade would be negatively affected. For example, if another student was copying from their exam or paper, they believed it was more unfair than if the student was copying off of another student. However, if they believed that the grading curve in the class was affected, they were more concerned.

Lastly, students believed they were entitled to get good grades if they worked hard and had earned good grades in the past.

Students Understood the Honor Code Differently Based on their Level of Moral Reasoning

Perhaps one of the most important findings in this study is that students at different levels of moral reasoning understood the honor code somewhat differently from their peers at different levels of moral reasoning. For example, students at the Preconventional level of moral reasoning adhered to the honor code because of the severe punishments associated with violating the *Code of Academic Integrity*. They were concerned with other students cheating when it directly affected their grade. However, students at the Postconventional level of moral reasoning supported the principles of honesty and integrity that are inherent in the *Code of Academic Integrity*. They believed that the honor code was "common sense" to students and should be adhered to so they did not differentiate between the honor code and the honor pledge. Finally, students in the Conventional level of moral reasoning placed a strong emphasis on knowing specific behaviors that were prohibited in the honor code. By being completely familiar with the honor code, they could do what was considered "right" and uphold the *Code of Academic Integrity.*

A few studies have examined the relationship between students' level of moral reasoning and cheating behavior and found that there is not a relationship between the two (Leming, 1978; Nuss, 1981; Smith, Ryan & Diggins, 1972; West, Ravenscroft & Shrader 2004). However, as discussed in Chapter 2, studies have shown that honor codes do have an impact on lower levels of reported cheating (McCabe & Trevino, 1993, 2002; May & Loyd, 1993; McCabe et al, 2002). Consequently, it is important for faculty and

administrators to stress the honor code on multiple levels. For example, for students who come to the University at the Preconventional level of moral reasoning, the fear of consequences may act as a significant deterrent to cheating. Therefore, emphasizing the consequences as outlined in the honor code could be beneficial for these students. However, for students who are at higher levels of moral development, conversations about the importance of integrity in their academic work may have meaningful and long-lasting impact on their decisions related to academic integrity and in their future life.

Limitations of the Study

As with all research, there were limitations to this study. For the qualitative component of this study, it is important to address my position as a researcher and as a professional in the field of Student Affairs. At the time of the study, I was serving as the Associate Director of Student Conduct at the University of Maryland. The job responsibilities include serving as a judicial hearing officer, overseeing and managing the academic integrity process, and advising the Student Honor Council. Because of my position at the University, participants may have been reluctant to share specific information such as whether or not they had engaged in behavior that is academically dishonest. Furthermore because of my position, it is also possible that my own perspectives and experiences may have impacted the analysis of the qualitative data. For example, based on my experience, I know that students are reluctant to report their peers for academic dishonesty. However, conducting member –checks and using peer debriefers helped to balance my role as a researcher.

Second, this study only examined students at the University of Maryland. As a large public institution with a modified honor code, it is difficult to determine if the experiences and interpretations of the students in this study are unique to the campus culture at the University of Maryland. Typically honor codes are found at smaller, private, and often times religiously affiliated institutions (McCabe & Trevino, 1993) with a long tradition of employing an honor code. The honor code at the University of Maryland, which was developed and implemented in 1990, is relatively new to the campus compared to institutions with traditional honor codes. Replicating this study at other institutions may yield different results.

Third, the findings are not necessarily generalizable to the larger population. This study was done with a small number of students who resided in the residence halls at the University of Maryland. Further research should be conducted to determine if similar findings exist with a different sample of students or at other institutions with honor codes.

Fourth, the DIT2 does not collect data on race or ethnicity. Perhaps the ability to do an analysis across racial and ethnic groups would yield interesting results about differences among students from various backgrounds. Also, despite the fact that the DIT2 was updated to remove outdated scenarios and language (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma & Bebeau, 1999) a review of the literature showed that no study has been conducted to examine how issues of difference including race and socioeconomic status may impact scores.

The final limitation of this study is its small sample size. Given that the Defining Issues Test, version 2 was given to only 400 out of the nearly 10,000 students who reside in the residence halls, it is important to recognize that the sample is small. Perhaps a

larger sample size and interviews with more students would yield different results. Additionally, because the sample was drawn only from students living on campus, results may change if a sample is drawn from the entire student population

Strengths of the Study

This study, exploring the relationship between moral reasoning and students' understanding of the honor code at the University of Maryland, has several strengths. First, this in-depth research provides a comprehensive look at how 15 students viewed and understood the honor code at the University of Maryland. By conducting individual interviews with each of the participants, the researcher was able to use the participants' words and feelings to explore how students understood the honor code.

Second, this study offers insight not only into how students understood the honor code but also how students at various levels of moral development interpreted and made meaning of the honor code. By using a mixed methods approach, the central research question was more fully explored. As suggested by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) there are benefits to using mixed methods in research. Tashakkori and Teddlie posited that mixed methods researchers often follow a pragmatic or practical approach to research. Specifically, pragmatists, "consider the research question to be more important than either the method they use or the worldview that is supposed to underlie the method," (Taskakkori & Teddlie, p.21). In this study, in order to explore the relationship between moral reasoning and students' understanding of an honor code, a mixed methods approach helped to fully explore the central research question by conducting qualitative interviews with students after assessing their level of moral reasoning.

Third, although this study was not designed to specifically explore students' attitudes toward academic integrity, findings emerged that provide significant insight in this area. For example findings so this study showed that students at all levels of moral development believe that cheating is common among students. Students at higher levels of moral reasoning believed that students cheat due to the pressure to succeed and specifically to get higher grades. They also believe that cheating is habitual. Students with higher levels of moral development also saw the consequences of cheating beyond the immediate consequences, such as failure in a class or dismissal from the University. Students in the "It's All About the Consequences" group (low group) accepted that cheating will happen on campus. Although they agreed that cheating was a violation of the *Code of Academic Integrity*, they believed that it was common on college campuses and they expected that students would cheat. One student, Nakia, even rationalized student behavior by saying that there are better and worse reasons to cheat. This finding supports other studies. For example, Diekhoff et. al. (1996) in their follow-up study of student cheating, surveyed 474 college students. Their findings suggested that cheating had become normative for students.

Finally, this study adds to the limited research on honor codes. A review of the literature at the beginning of this research project showed that no previous study had explored the relationship between moral reasoning and students' understanding of an honor code. In recent years, several campuses have adopted an honor code, including the University of Maryland. It is important to understand how students make meaning of honor codes and how they interpret honor codes so that honor codes can help to reduce academic dishonesty on college campuses.

Implications for Practice

This study yielded several findings which can be used to inform higher education administrators and faculty.   First, faculty must play an active role in supporting and enforcing academic integrity policies at the University of Maryland and on campuses in general. It is important for faculty members to emphasize academic integrity in the classroom. This includes having discussions about the honor code, placing the honor code or a statement about the importance of academic integrity on course syllabi, and encouraging students to write out and sign the honor pledge. Students, particularly those in the Conventional level, believed that the relationship that they have with their faculty members influences their decisions regarding academic integrity. Although it may be easier for faculty with smaller classes to build relationships with students, faculty need to respond when students reach out and try to build relationships with them. Faculty should also not be afraid to initiate relationships with students. Students in this study reported that if they respected their teachers and had a positive relationship with them, they were less likely to cheat or even be tempted to cheat. They valued approval from their faculty and did not want to disappoint their instructors by cheating.

Findings of this study suggest that students expect the University to govern their academic work. Faculty have a unique opportunities in the classroom to hold conversations with students about issues of honesty and integrity. I believe it is important for faculty to share their own ethical standards as well as the ethical standards of their profession with students. This will help students to understand that ethical standards govern people's behavior beyond the college environment and that their faculty

members must also adhere to standards of ethics in their discipline as well as in their role as a faculty member. Pavela (2007) suggests that faculty members introduce students to the ethical standards that are relevant to their discipline. Many times faculty may not view the classroom as an appropriate means to convey ethical standards to students, However, students in this study suggest that they would welcome such discussions. Conversations about ethics may differ depending on the discipline of the faculty member. For example, students enrolled in professional programs or college such as business, engineering, and journalism may find it helpful to discuss ethics as it relates to their future profession. Students studying in arts and humanities may benefit from broader discussion relating to ethics in a more general sense as it may relate to their profession of choice.

Parker Palmer (1993) discusses the importance of teachers improving their performance as teaches through conversations with one another. However, he argues that teachers must look beyond the idea of teaching in terms of technique only. Focusing on teaching as a "how-to" technique may cause teachers to miss the opportunity to have conversations about teaching that have richer and deeper meaning and that are ultimately more rewarding to the teacher. Perhaps if teachers create opportunities in their classroom to have conversations with students it will help students understand the importance of academic integrity. It may also help students explore the value of ethics and integrity beyond academic integrity and perhaps both students and faculty members will find the conversation educational and enriching to their academic and their personal life.

Second, academic integrity should be reinforced in as many different ways as possible. Since students at different levels of moral development viewed the honor code

somewhat differently, it is important that the honor code is discussed frequently and in different ways. Upon their arrival to the University and during orientation students should be introduced to the honor code and to the specific expectations. This information should be discussed and reinforced in the classroom. The conversations may have to take different forms in order to reach across students at all levels of moral reasoning. A recommendation from a student in the study, Jim, suggested that administrators "look at how we can change people's minds about cheating and really make a difference in their lives." Another student, Mai, suggested that there be a balance in education between teaching the sciences and teaching morality and values to students. Although this may not reach all students, those at higher levels of moral reasoning may find value in having these discussions with faculty and with their peers.

Faculty and administrators should also be willing to show trust in students and talk about the importance of integrity and honesty. They should discuss how dishonesty will impact students later in life since many students at higher levels of moral reasoning believed that cheating was habitual. Because students place such a strong emphasis on grades, it may be important for faculty to de-emphasize the importance of grades and emphasize the importance of integrity.

The final implication is to get students talking about the honor code. Most of them reported that they have never had conversations with their friends about academic integrity, yet findings from this study, as well as previous research (McCabe & Trevino, 1993), show that peers influence behavior. One student, Michael, said "not all students respect the faculty, whereas most students are going to respect their peers." Presentations to students that engage them in conversations about academic integrity may help students

make better choices around issues of academic integrity. As discussed in Chapter 2, some studies show that students and faculty differ on their opinions regarding what constitutes academic dishonesty. If students engage in conversations with their peers and with faculty members, it is more likely that students and faculty will agree on what behaviors constitute academic dishonesty.

Furthermore, such conversations might also help students understand the importance of peer reporting. McCabe and Trevino (1993) suggest that students at honor code institutions tend to accept more responsibility for issues of academic integrity on their campus than schools without an honor code. Perhaps engaging students in conversations about the importance of academic integrity will help students accept more responsibility for academic integrity on campus. Consequently they may be more willing to report their peers for behavior they consider to be unacceptable.

For institutions that do not currently have an honor code, institutional leaders may want to consider adopting one. Many students in the study expected the University to have an honor code and at the very least to hold students accountable for academic dishonesty. Adopting an honor code and educating students in various ways about issues of academic integrity may help to reduce academic dishonesty among students. The results of this study show that if institutional leaders decide to adopt an honor code, it is important to discuss the honor code frequently and in different ways, such as at orientation and in the classroom.

<div align="center">Implications for Theory</div>

This study adds to the scholarship on moral development and academic integrity. First, by looking at how students understand an honor code through the lens of moral

reasoning, survey data on moral reasoning was collected for nearly 300 students at the University of Maryland. The findings of the data analysis support previous data on college students. Specifically, the mean P-score and N2 scores are consistent with thousands of studies based on the normative data collected at the Center for the Study of Ethical Development. The findings suggest that most of the students in the sample are in the Conventional level of moral development.

Second, this study adds to the limited literature on academic integrity. It adds to a small body of literature on the use of honor codes as a deterrent to academic dishonesty among undergraduate students. Specifically, this study found that students support honor codes and feel that faculty behavior was a significant factor in student behavior regarding cheating. It reinforced findings from other studies indicating that students are reluctant to report their peers (Jendrik, 1982; McCabe & Trevino, 1993; McCabe et. al. 2001). It also reinforced Jordan's (2001) findings that peer behavior affects students' attitudes and behaviors regarding academic integrity.

Third, it adds insight into students' attitudes toward cheating behavior. Specifically, students cheat due to the pressure to succeed (Baird, 1980; Labeff et al. 1990) and because of their desire to achieve higher grades. Students in this study placed a strong emphasis on grades and some believed that students would do anything, including cheat, because of their desire to achieve higher grades. This study also found that students at higher levels of moral reasoning believe that cheating was habitual and could be detrimental to cheaters later in life. This supports findings from other studies that have linked academic dishonesty to dishonesty in careers (Nonis & Swift, 2001; Sims, 1993).

Finally, a review of the literature shows that most of the studies on academic integrity are quantitative studies. By conducting a mixed methods study, this study adds insight into students' attitudes toward the honor code and toward academic integrity using rich qualitative data gathered from the interviews with students.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study offers several avenues for future research. First, this study lays the foundation for future research in this area in exploring the relationship between students' level of moral reasoning and their understanding of honor codes. Further studies, perhaps with a larger number of participants, may either confirm these findings or may elicit different findings.

Second, one might consider how students in different peer environments understand the honor code. For example, students who typically place a high emphasis on peer groups such as student athletes, or students involved in fraternity and sorority life may understand the honor code differently. Another study may examine how graduate students understand an honor code. There is evidence that graduate students engage in academic dishonesty to some degree (Love & Simmons, 1998; Wajda-Johnston, Handal, Brawer, & Fabricatore, 2001). Perhaps exploring how they understand the honor code will lend insight into cheating behavior among graduate students. Students in different majors and in living/learning programs can also be studied to explore their understanding of an honor code.

A third area that can be explored is how adults who attended honor code institutions make sense of the impact that their honor code has had on their decisions later on in life. As discussed in Chapter 1, with the recent corporate scandals and ethical

violations in society, it would be important to find out any long-term impact that honor codes have on students who attended honor code institutions.

Fourth, data on moral reasoning was collected for nearly 300 students at the University of Maryland. This data can be further analyzed to learn more information about students' moral reasoning in college. For example, the relationship between students' moral reasoning and their involvement in the discipline process, in living learning programs or in leadership programs can be explored.

Fifth, it may be interesting to explore students understanding of the honor code and academic integrity through a difference theoretical lens. Holland 91993) proposed people's choice of career is based in large part on their personality. He suggested that occupations can be divided into six main categories or groups. Each group represents a different personality (artistic, conventional, enterprising, investigative, realistic, and social). It would be interesting to explore students understanding of the honor code based on their "Holland type" to determine if students understand the honor code differently depending on their type.

Finally it would be beneficial to study students who attend institutions with traditional honor codes. Studies of the prevalence of cheating show that there is less reported cheating at institutions with traditional honor codes versus institutions with modified honor codes like the University of Maryland (McCabe & Trevino, 1993; 2002). Furthermore, since this study is not generalizable to students at all colleges and universities, studying institutions of different sizes, areas of the country, and with different missions would be interesting.

Conclusion

Academic dishonesty is a serious and pervasive problem facing campus administrators and faculty. Some colleges, like this University, have adopted an honor code to deter academic dishonesty. According to researchers, honor codes are effective deterrents to academic dishonesty (Bowers, 1964; Campbell, 1935; Canning, 1956; McCabe & Trevino, 1993; McCabe et al., 1996, 1999; McCabe & Butterfield, 1999). However, in order for honor codes to be effective, students must understand them so they can adhere to the expectations set forth in the codes. This study sought to expand the scholarship on academic integrity by examining the relationship between moral reasoning and a policy (an honor code) designed to deter academic dishonesty and promote academic integrity. Although the findings of this study are not generalizable to all students at all institutions, the findings of this study suggest that students' attitudes toward the honor code, their interpretation of the honor code, and the meaning they make of the honor code, are slightly different based on their level of moral reasoning. These findings are helpful to campus administrators so that we can educate students in different and meaningful ways about the honor code such as in orientation in the classroom and by having discussion with students about the importance of academic integrity. Although students in this study said that the honor code does not necessarily make a difference in their decisions to cheat or not, previous research shows that honor codes have an impact on reduced levels of cheating. Students may not attribute their choices regarding academic integrity directly to the honor code, but it is evident through the conversations with students, that the honor code, even if indirectly, impacts the behavior of students at the University of Maryland.

In concluding this study I am reminded of a quote by Theodore Roosevelt that has particular meaning to the findings of this study.

> "In any moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing. After all, if we do the wrong thing, at least we can learn."

This quote has meaning to this study in several ways. First, research and experience informs us that students will likely cheat in college. We can choose to ignore it and do nothing, or we can implement policies and procedures on our campuses to try to deter academic dishonesty among students. Although the honor code may not prevent all cheating, it will likely prevent some students from cheating whether for fear of the consequences, because students desire to uphold the "laws of the university," or simply because upholding academic integrity is considered best for the larger community. Finally, if students do the "wrong thing" and engage in academic dishonesty at the University, we hope that at least they can learn from their mistakes.

DIT-2

Defining Issues Test

Version 3.0

University of Minnesota

Center for the Study of Ethical Development

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Presidential Election

Imagine that you are about to vote for a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. Imagine that before you vote, you are given several questions, and asked which issues is most important to you in making up your mind about which candidate to vote for. In this example, 5 items are given. In a rating scale of 1 to 5 (1=Great, 2=Much, 3=Some, 4=Little, 5=No) please rate the importance of the item (issue) by filling in with a pencil one of the bubbles on the answer sheet by each item.

APPENDIX B - Consent Form

Project Title: Exploring Student Responses to Social Issues

Purpose: The purpose of this research project is to assess student responses to social issues.

Procedures: The procedures involve taking an instrument called the Defining Issues Test, version, 2. You will be asked to read 5 short scenarios and respond to each. You may complete the survey from your room. It will take about 40 minutes to complete.

Confidentiality: We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, all information will be reported anonymously and no individual will be identified in any written or verbal report of any kind If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.
In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or neglect or potential harm to you or others.

Risks: There are no known risk to participating in this research project.

Benefits: This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about students' moral development in college. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of how students reason about moral issues.

Right to Withdraw and Ask Questions: Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Joann Prosser at 301-314-7598 or Jprosser@umd.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: **Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678**
This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Incentives: I understand that I will receive two movie coupons for completing and submitting the survey. This gift is to let me know that my help in this study is important and appreciated.

You signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; the research has been explained to you; your questions have been fully answered; and you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

Name: **Date:**

Signature:

February 2006

Dear Student:

I am a doctoral student in the College of Education here at the University of Maryland. I am currently conducting my dissertation research in the Department of Education, Policy, Planning and Administration. You may recall completing a survey earlier this semester, given to you by your Resident Assistant, in which you were asked to read a few scenarios and respond to several questions. When completing the survey, you indicated that you would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Based on your responses to the survey, I am inviting to participate in my research study conducted as part of my dissertation at the University.

The survey was an instrument used to measure the moral development of students living in the residence halls. Each student was given a numerical score upon completion of the instrument. Although these scores will mean very little to you as a student, they helped me understand more about each students' level of moral reasoning. Typically college students' scores fall within a small range. However, for the purposes of my study, I will be placing students in 3 separate groups based on their score. I will be happy to explain more about this if you are interested.

I will be calling you in the next few days to discuss more about my dissertation project and to set up a personal interview with you which is expected to last about 45 minutes to an hour. I look forward to meeting you and setting up a time for our interview.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at 301.314.8206.

Sincerely,

Andrea Goodwin
Doctoral Student
College of Education

<div align="center">**APPENDIX D - Consent Form**</div>

Project Title: Exploring Students' Understanding of the Honor Code at the University of Maryland.

Purpose: The purpose of this research project is to explore students' understanding of the Honor Code at the University of Maryland. This is a research project conducted by Andrea Goodwin at the University of Maryland. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you meet with criteria for the study.

Procedures: The procedure will involve a one-on-one interview that will last approximately 45 minutes. During the interview, you will be asked to respond to open-ended questions posed by the researcher focusing on your understanding of the Honor Code at the University.

Confidentiality: We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, all information will be reported anonymously and no individual will be identified in any written or verbal report of any kind If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.
In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or neglect or potential harm to you or others.

This research project involves making audiotapes of the interviews. These tapes will be maintained by the researcher at the researcher's home and will only be used by the principle investigator, the interviewer, and the hired transcriber. The tapes will be destroyed within two years following the completion of the study.

Risks: There are no known risk to participating in this research project.

Benefits: This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about how students' view and understand the Honor Code at the University. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of how students view and understand the Honor Code.

Right to Withdraw and Ask Questions: Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Andrea Goodwin at 301.314.8206 or agoodwin@umd.edu, 2118 Mitchell Building, CAMPUS.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: **Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678**
This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

You signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; the research has been explained to you; your questions have been fully answered; and you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

Name: _____   **Date:** _____

Signature:_____

Purpose: To explore students' understanding of the honor code at the University of Maryland.

Interview Overview:
Name:_____
Date/Time:_____
Location:_____

Interview Process:
1. Welcome participant
2. Introduce myself and the research study
3. Explain the interview process
   a. The conversation will be kept confidential
   b. The interview will be tape recorded if student agrees
   c. Student will be provided with a transcript of the tape in order to make additions, clarification, or edits.
   d. Inform participants that I will be taking notes during the interview to assist with data analysis.

Interview Questions:
1. Begin with Demographic Information: (age, year at Maryland, major, race, ethnicity, religious)
2. Tell me about your experience as a student at the University of Maryland.
3. What activities, if any, are you involved in?

Meaning
4. Tell me what you know about the honor code at the University of Maryland?
5. Why do you think the University has an honor code?
6. Do you routinely write out and sign the honor pledge at the University?
7. Why do you think it is important to sign the honor pledge?

Attitudes
8. Has your attitude toward the honor code changed since you first became a student at the University? For example, have you thought differently about it? Do you feel differently about it?
9. Have you observed academic dishonesty at the University?
10. Would it surprise you to learn that approximately 65% of college students admit to academic dishonesty?

Interpretation
11. What do you believe is the purpose of the honor code?
12. What is your understanding of the purpose of the honor code?

13. When making a decision regarding whether or not to commit academic dishonesty, do you think students consider the fact that the University has an honor code?
14. Is there anything else you want to share with me about your understanding or views of the honor code?

Closure
15. Remind participant of transcription.
16. Remind participant of possible follow-up interview.
17. Thank participant.

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