

Supplementary Online Materials

Students' Reasoning About Whether to Report When Others Cheat: Conflict, Confusion, and Consequences

In these supplementary materials, we report additional details on participants, coding, and data analysis for Studies 1 and 2.

Study 1

Method

Participants. We recruited 147 participants, but 6 were excluded due to missing audio, yielding a final sample size of 141. Participants were asked to report several demographics. See [Table S1](#) for a breakdown of the questions asked, and a summary of responses across all participants.

Table S1

List of Demographic Questions and Summary of Responses

Question	# responding	Response summary
What is your age?	139	Mean age = 19.76 years ($SD = 1.76$)
What year are you in school?	122	37% first year, 25% second year, 20% third year, 18% fourth year
What, if any, gender do you identify with?	139	67% women, 31% men, 2% non-binary
What is your major?	139	53% Psychology or Cognitive Science, 12% Biology, 12% Undeclared, 4% Economics, 3% Neuroscience, 3% Sociology, 10% Other
Are you a first-generation student? (i.e., none of your parents received a Bachelor's degree in the US)	132	46% first-generation students
What is your first language?	132	55% English, 27% Spanish, 6% Chinese, 12% other languages
Were you born in the US?	109	80% born in the US

Materials and procedure. The research was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board ([blinded]). Prior to providing consent, participants were informed that their responses would only be available to the researchers and would be assigned a code number. They

were also told that their audio recordings would be masked, transcribed, and then the recordings would be deleted. Participants were also informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and there would be no punishment for quitting. They were also told that their responses in the study could not be used against them by any members of the university. Lastly, participants were asked for permission to audio-record the interview. No participants denied permission. The responses were securely stored in accordance with university IRB policy.

As part of a larger study, participants were first interviewed about their attitudes toward academic misconduct ([blinded]). Participants were asked to read hypothetical scenarios involving possible plagiarism or other types of cheating, evaluate the hypothetical characters' actions, and explain their reasoning. At the end of this interview, participants completed a survey in which they provided information such as demographics (see [Table S1](#)), self-reported engagement in plagiarism (see [Appendix](#)), and answered general open-ended questions about plagiarism and cheating ([Table S2](#)). Study 1 data are based on participant responses to the final open-ended question ([Table S2](#)).

Table S2

Summary of Responses to General Questions about Cheating and Plagiarism (Study 1)

General Question Asked	# responding	Response summary (%)		
		yes	no	other
<i>Should there be rules against...</i>				
... cheating?	44	98%	0%	2%
... plagiarism?	71	94%	3%	3%
<i>Do you think ... affects anyone else besides the person doing it?</i>				
... cheating ...	67	85%	10%	4%
... plagiarism ...	70	79%	11%	10%
<i>Do you think ... makes it harder for other students to get good grades?</i>				
... cheating ...	67	54%	24%	22%
... plagiarism ...	69	46%	42%	12%
<i>[if yes: Does that] / [if no: If it did, would that] affect how you evaluate...</i>				
... cheating?	62	69%	27%	3%
... plagiarism?	69	74%	25%	1%
<i>*If you knew that someone was engaging in ... would you report it to anyone? Why?</i>				
... cheating ...	70	10%	47%	43%
... plagiarism ...	71	13%	49%	38%

Note. "other" responses included "it depends," "neither," and "maybe"

*Prompt used for the present study

In Study 1, 36 participants in the *cheating* condition were asked about “academic misconduct” and 34 were asked about “cheating.” We combined these groups into a single *other cheating* group as the two terms are often used interchangeably.

Additionally, as part of the larger study, 42 participants were asked about both *cheating* and *plagiarism*, but only one set of responses was used per participant (either *cheating* or *plagiarism*). To ensure a full between-subjects design, participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions; their data was only kept and analyzed for that condition.

Data coding. As mentioned in the main text, transcribed records of participant interviews were independently classified by two coders. Reliability was assessed by computing Cohen’s kappa scores (κ) for both coders’ categorization of a random subset of the data (20% of all responses) (McHugh, 2012). For brevity, only the coding schemes used for main analyses were summarized in the main text. Here, we provide the full list. [Table S3](#) summarizes each of the coding schemes. Below, we provide more detailed explanations of all the schemes.

Decision. Participants were allowed to give an open-ended response to the question, “would you report it [plagiarism/cheating]?”. Each statement was coded for the participant’s decision to report as either in favor of reporting (e.g., “I would report”) or opposed to reporting (e.g., “I would not report”). It was also noted when the participant’s decision to report was contingent on some factor (e.g., “it depends on what it is”).

Reference to school policy. Participants’ statements were assessed for the factual nature of their assertions regarding the rules, process, or consequences of reporting cheating. For example, although the university’s policy enjoins students to report any academic misconduct of which they are aware, many students may not know the policy. Statements were categorized as *ignorance/rejection of policy* (e.g., “You don’t rat out other students when they’re cheating”), *reference to actual policy* (e.g., “I know I should [report]”), *ambiguous* (e.g., “it’s just more work for everybody if you report plagiarism”), or *irrelevant statements* (e.g., “Well I don’t know, it depends on the setting”). Most statements of ignorance/rejection of policies and ambiguous statements pertained to: a lack of student responsibility to report; disproportionately severe consequences (e.g., ruining someone’s life); difficult or time-consuming reporting procedures (e.g., filling out paperwork and attending hearings); and explicitly asserting a lack of knowledge about the process (e.g., “I first of all have no idea how I would go about reporting it”).

Alternative actions. Mentions of any alternative actions were coded as present when the participant suggested another action to intervene in the cheating, besides reporting, such as directly involving themselves in the writing process (e.g., “I’d try to help them with the citations or with the paraphrasing”), or by speaking to the person (e.g., “I would probably talk to the student before reporting”). Statements containing alternative actions were not coded for the other schemes (decision, reference to school policy, etc.).

Focus on cheating or reporting. When deciding to report, participants came up with reasons focused on either the act of cheating or the act of reporting. When the act of cheating was specifically mentioned (e.g., “Definitely. Just on moral grounds, I feel like they shouldn’t be getting a better grade because they already know the answers to it”), then a focus on cheating was marked. Otherwise, if reasoning pertained to the act of reporting (e.g., “if you report a person to the school, you might ruin their whole life”), a focus on reporting was marked.

Table S3

Descriptions and Reliability Scores (κ) for all Coding Categories

Coded variable	κ	Description	Coding categories
Decision	.92	The participant's decision about whether to report	Would report; Would not report; It depends
Reference to school policy	.87	Whether the participant references actual school policies regarding the process or consequences of reporting cheating	Ignorance/rejection of school policy; Reference to actual school policy; Ambiguous; Irrelevant statement
Alternative actions	1.00	Spontaneous mention of another action, besides reporting, which intervenes on the cheating	Present; Absent
Focus on cheating or reporting	.88	Whether the participant's reasoning focused on the act of cheating or the act of reporting	Cheating act; Reporting; Both
Relevant agents: Reporter	.92	Whether the participant mentioned themselves in their reasoning	Present; Absent
Relevant agents: Cheater	.92	Whether the cheater was explicitly mentioned	Present; Absent
Relevant agents: Others	.94	Whether other individuals were mentioned (e.g., classmates or teachers)	Present; Absent
Type of concern	.86	Type of value, feature, or outcome that the participant refers to in justifying their decision	Social and physical consequences; Grades and punishment; Unspecified consequences; Responsibility; Rules; Relationship; Reasons for act; Welfare, justice, and fairness; Evaluation of act; Other
Mitigating feature	1.00	Each statement was classified based on a situation or feature of the act that would alter decision to report (to be manipulated in Study 2)	e.g., Cheating on a homework assignment that is worth very few points; Plagiarizing a lot of text (for all statements, see Table S8)

Relevant agents (reporter, cheater, or others). In their responses, participants mentioned several relevant parties: the *reporter*, the *cheater*, or *other* persons. A mention of the reporter was defined as whenever the participant would explicitly mention their own agency in the context of reporting or the act (e.g., “because I don’t want to be involved in that kind of stuff”).¹ The second type of agent is the cheater, defined as an explicit mention of the person to be reported in the hypothetical situation. The final category includes any other people being explicitly mentioned. Examples of these include professors, teaching assistants, or other students in the class. Note that there could be multiple relevant agents in one statement, such as the reporter and cheater (e.g., “I think it would be hard for me to be responsible for somebody getting a failing grade or for somebody to be kicked out of school and sort of ruin their lives”). There could also be no relevant agents in statements (e.g., “I feel like cheating isn’t that bad”).

Type of concern. Participants were prompted to provide reasons for their decision of whether to report. A concern is defined as a belief, value, or result which motivates the decision to report or refrain from reporting. There were ten categories: *Social and physical consequences*; *Grades and punishment*; *Unspecified consequences*; *Responsibility*; *Relationship*; *Rules*; *Welfare, justice, and fairness*; *Reasons for act*; *Evaluation of act*; and *Other*. For more information on each of the ten categories, and illustrative quotes, see [Table S4](#).

¹ For this category, we excluded “I” statements that were artifacts of the interview question (e.g., “I feel like that’s the instructor’s job”). Participants had to explicitly involve themselves in the situation for the statement to be counted as referring to the reporter (e.g., “I would tell them that it seems like plagiarism, but I wouldn’t report, because I feel like I already did my duty to tell them at least”).

Table S4

Categories of Justifications for Reporting or Not Reporting

Type of Concern	Description	Examples
Social and physical consequences	Any social or physical consequence of an act	“It would just create drama” “Snitches get stitches”
Grades and punishment	Academic or career-related consequences of an act	“I wouldn’t want to just destroy someone’s academic career like that” “If it was like, that kid is going to drive the average down or mess up the curve, then I might tell on him”
Unspecified consequences	Any mention of another consequence not included in the other categories, or not specifying what the consequence is	“It doesn’t affect me” “[I would report it] if it affected the other students in some way”
Responsibility	Determining whose job it is to police students; any comment about who should report	“I feel like that’s the instructor’s job [to report]” “It’s not really my business”

Relationship	Any reference to the relationship between some people to justify decision	“Like if it was one of my friends, I probably wouldn't report it” “If it was a close friend, I would”
Rules	Social or institutional rules. Can also include participant stating their own rules	“You don't out other students ... it's just student code” “It's not okay because it's against the rules”
Welfare, justice, and fairness	Any reasoning relating to the violation or upholding of moral principles	“I feel like they shouldn't be getting a better grade because they already know the answers to it”
Reasons for act	Taking into account people's motivations for actions to decide what is the right response	“It largely depends on the reason of why they are plagiarizing” “A lot of people unintentionally plagiarize”
Evaluation of act	Any evaluation of the act itself (cheating or reporting). Includes statements about <i>not caring</i> , which were rare.	“If it was blatant plagiarism” “It's more or less cruel [to report], I guess”
Other	Any reason which does not fit the other categories	“Probably not, just because even though I know they do it, I know I sometimes do it too”

Mitigating feature. Participants described features of situations that would make them more likely to report (e.g., “on a paper or on a test, if I saw someone cheating on a test, maybe I would”) or less likely to report (e.g., “if I knew someone else cheated on the worksheet thing or a really small assignment, I probably wouldn't...”). Based on these responses, 41 hypothetical situations were identified and coded for (see [Table S8](#) for complete list of situations). These features were the basis for the scenarios presented in Study 2.

Data analysis. Models included fixed effects of condition (*plagiarism* vs. *other cheating*) and decision to report (*report, it depends, not report*). Dichotomous dependent variables included decision of whether to report, presence of alternative actions, presence of each of the categories of concerns (e.g., *responsibility, evaluation of act*), etc. Hypotheses were tested using likelihood ratio tests and post-hoc Wald tests.

Results

Overall decisions to report. Participants' decisions about whether to report did not vary based on demographic factors (age, gender, first-generation status, and international status), $Ds(1) < 0.96$, $ps > .328$. Thus, demographic factors were not included in subsequent models.

Differences between presence of conflict or alternative action between conditions. Participants expressed conflict by giving conflicting statements and reasons, such as “I don't

know, I should probably report it, but I almost don't want to get involved in a situation like that." The presence of neither conflict ($D[1] = 0.57, p = .450$) nor alternative actions ($D[1] = 2.02, p = .155$) had any differences based on condition (*plagiarism* vs. *other cheating*). Among those who spontaneously offered alternative actions, 93% said they would confront the transgressor privately.

What reasons did students provide for and against reporting? To expand on the qualitative results presented in the main text, further examples of common justifications are provided here. In support of reporting, many participants provided *evaluations about the act* of academic misconduct or reporting (e.g., "It's not something that we should do. It's just not okay, like I said earlier"). (Statements about *not caring* or that cheating is *not a big deal* were included in this act evaluation category, but only mentioned by five participants.) Many also mentioned *unspecified consequences* (e.g., if cheating affected other people "in some way") or appealed to *welfare, justice, or fairness* to support a decision to report.

In opposition to reporting, many participants felt like "it's not [their] job to point people out" (*responsibility*), and instead that "it would be really easy for the TA or professor to spot [cheating]." All three types of consequences—*grades and punishment, social and physical*, and *unspecified consequences*—were common reasons against reporting. Many participants also justified their decisions against reporting by mentioning evaluations centered around the act of cheating not being serious enough (e.g., on a minor assignment) or reporting being undesirable.

Self-reported engagement in plagiarism and cheating. Most participants self-reported engaging in at least one act of plagiarism or cheating in the past year (68%), and most had at least one experience in the past year in which they were unsure about whether they were committing plagiarism (72%). Nearly all participants engaged in at least one act of plagiarism or cheating during their academic careers (96%). [Table S5](#) summarizes participant responses for the individual survey items (survey is shown in the [Appendix](#)).

Table S5

Summary of Self-Reported Engagement in Plagiarism (Study 1)

Survey item	Number of times in the past year		Number of times in your lifetime	
	Mean (SD)	Median	Mean (SD)	Median
Writing service	0.35 (0.97)	0	2.19 (6.16)	0
Copying students	2.14 (2.94)	1.5	14.48 (32.08)	5
Copying yourself	1.62 (2.94)	0	4.95 (22.47)	1
Copying other sources	1.70 (2.87)	0	6.14 (11.91)	2
Other	0.74 (1.60)	0	2.44 (6.51)	0
Unsure	3.73 (3.87)	3	15.35 (33.57)	5

Note. Ranges (e.g., 6-10) and word phrases (e.g., "a lot") were converted to single numeric values for the purpose of computing means and medians. See [Appendix](#) for full prompts.

Further Discussion

The findings from Study 1 highlight students' competing considerations when it comes to reporting a peer for cheating. Even though the majority of participants agreed that plagiarism and other forms of cheating make it harder for other students to get good grades, they also believed that it was not their responsibility to police their peers. In line with other research, we also found that many students believe that the punishments cheaters would face were too harsh to warrant reporting unless the cheating was especially egregious (Gullifer & Tyson, 2010; Newton, 2016).

Students' reasoning underscored the complexity of decisions to report—many students were unable to make an overall decision without more information about the specific circumstances. Instead, some offered their own hypothetical scenarios and reasoned about those cases (e.g., “Maybe if someone was cheating off me”).

Nearly all participants (96%) had engaged in some form of academic misconduct during their academic careers. This, alongside the vast range of hypothetical circumstances offered, suggests that what determines whether a student will engage in cheating is not their individual dispositions or personalities, but the specific contexts they find themselves in.

A wealth of research has supported the notion that people act consistently with their judgments and values (Ajzen, 1985, 1988; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Knafo, Roccas, & Sagiv, 2011; Schwartz, 2012). Therefore, we pose that when students say they would not report cheating, one reason is that they do not see reporting as acceptable in that situation. For instance, this may be because the specific act of cheating is not seen as a serious violation (for other reasons participants brought up in Study 1, see [Table S4](#)).

Overall, participants' decision-making process was shown to be more complex than recorded previously in the literature. This suggests that, although general questions are informative, they are not sufficient to thoroughly understand specific decisions. General attitudes can inform overall patterns of behavior; for example, students generally believe cheating is wrong, and, in line with this general evaluation, students usually avoid cheating (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Waltzer et al., 2019). Research should incorporate systematic manipulations of the circumstances of the cheating (e.g., by mentioning the type of cheating or the reasons the person had) to get a better understanding of the relative importance of the variety of considerations mentioned in this study.

Limitations

There were some limitations of Study 1. First, the reasoning participants gave was not prompted any further than their initial responses. As a result, interesting or ambiguous statements could not be developed further, and we may have missed fundamental concerns students have when it comes to reporting a peer. For example, Rennie and Crosby's (2002) work showed that the process of reporting was a significant barrier, and even though this topic was spontaneously brought up by some of our participants, the issue was not as prominent as it was in Rennie and Crosby's focus groups. Second, participants were only presented with the two options previously given in the literature (to report or do nothing). Although we did record mentions of alternative actions, they were all spontaneous. As a result, the true percentage of students who prefer alternative actions could be much larger. Confirming this in a follow-up study ($N = 40$), when directly prompted, most participants (73%) said they would take alternative actions. Lastly, it is difficult to determine the extent to which a social desirability bias existed in this research. Because students were interviewed by researchers who could be perceived as representing the university, students may have been more inclined to provide reasons in favor of reporting a peer.

Study 2

Method

Participants. Participants were asked to report several demographics. See [Table S6](#) for a breakdown of the questions asked, and a summary of responses across all 103 participants.

Table S6

List of Demographic Questions and Summary of Responses

Question	# responses	Response summary
How old are you?	98	Mean age = 20.20 year ($SD = 1.52$)
What year are you in school?	98	17% first year, 28% second year, 36% third year, 16% fourth year, 3% fifth year
What, if any, gender would you identify with?	101	76 women, 24 men, 1 bigender
Please indicate the racial/ethnic groups you identify with. (can select multiple)	101	3% African American, 32% Chicano/Latino, 39% Asian, 38% European American
Were you born in the US?	101	81% born in the US
(of those born in the US) Were your parents born in the US?	81	49% had parents born in US
Before coming to [university], did you go to school in the US?	101	93% had gone to school in the US
What are your parents' educational levels?	96	(highest degree attained) 19% high school or lower, 17% some college, 33% bachelor's degree, 29% graduate degree
Are you a first-generation student?	101	45% first-generation college students
What is your first language?	97	61% English, 18% Spanish, 9% Chinese, 12% Other

Materials. Participants were presented with several scenarios in which they were asked to make decisions about reporting: 1 general scenario on cheating, 1 general scenario on plagiarism, and 41 modified cheating and plagiarism situations. The full list of modified scenarios is available in [Table S8](#).

Procedure. First, all participants provided consent. Then, the first part of the survey involved making decisions about cheating and plagiarism in general situations, without manipulations. The wording of these general questions was similar to Study 1 (e.g., "If you knew that a student was cheating, would you report it to anyone?"), to facilitate replication. In addition, participants were asked whether they believed they *should* report ("Do you think you *should* report when you know someone is cheating?", dichotomous choice between *should report*

and *should not report*). They also rated their *likelihood of reporting* (scale from 0 = “Extremely unlikely” to 10 = “Extremely likely”) and how *good or bad it would be to report* (scale from 0 = “Really bad” to 10 = “Really good”). They were then shown their responses (e.g., “You said you **would not report** if you knew a student was engaging in cheating and you also said that you **should report** it.”) and asked to explain their decisions with an open-ended text response (“Please explain your reasoning”). Note that Study 2 had a within-subjects design: Each participant gave two sets of judgments, and two open-ended responses (one about plagiarism and another about cheating).

Next, participants were shown a block of plagiarism situations and a block of cheating situations (randomized order of presentation). The plagiarism block had 21 scenarios, and the cheating block had 20 scenarios. These scenarios were derived from reasons commonly raised by students in Study 1. To promote ecological validity, original wording provided by participants was paraphrased or used as-is whenever possible. See [Table S8](#) for a full list with exact wording for each scenario. Following each scenario description, participants were asked to rate their likelihood of reporting the act, to make a dichotomous choice of whether to report or not, and to rate how good or bad reporting would be in the situation ([Table S7](#)).

Table S7

Prompts Following Each Scenario (Study 2)

Question	Possible responses
How likely would you be to report it?	Rating scale: 0 (Extremely unlikely) – 10 (Extremely likely)
If you had to choose, would you lean towards reporting or not reporting?	Forced choice: Report / Do not report
On the following scale, please rate how good or bad it would be to report	Rating scale: 0 (Really bad) – 10 (Really good)

[Figure S1](#) shows a screenshot of an example scenario. Participants were given the option to skip questions. At the end of the survey, participants were asked to fill out a series of demographic questions (see [Table S6](#) for a summary).

Data coding and analysis. In addition to classifying the open-ended statements according to the schemes mentioned in the main text, the 41 modified scenarios were also classified according to the same schemes (*for or against reporting*, *target of evaluation*, *relevant parties*, and *type of concern*). Agreement was high, all κ s = 1.00. As in Study 1, participant statements about *not caring* were too rare to be studied on their own (only one participant mentioned this reason). Again, this was included in the *evaluation of act* concern category.

As stated in the main text, McNemar’s method was used to test effects of condition on dichotomous dependent variables (e.g., decision to report, presence of alternative actions) (Agresti, 2002). Exact binomial tests were used instead of chi-square tests to account for cases in which cell frequencies were low.

Imagine you know that someone is cheating and in doing so they receive a better grade than those who worked honestly.

How likely would you be to report it?

Extremely unlikely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely likely



If you had to choose, would you lean towards reporting or not reporting?

Report

Do not report

On the following scale, please rate how good or bad it would be to report:

Really bad 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Really good



Figure S1. Example cheating scenario as it would appear in online survey.

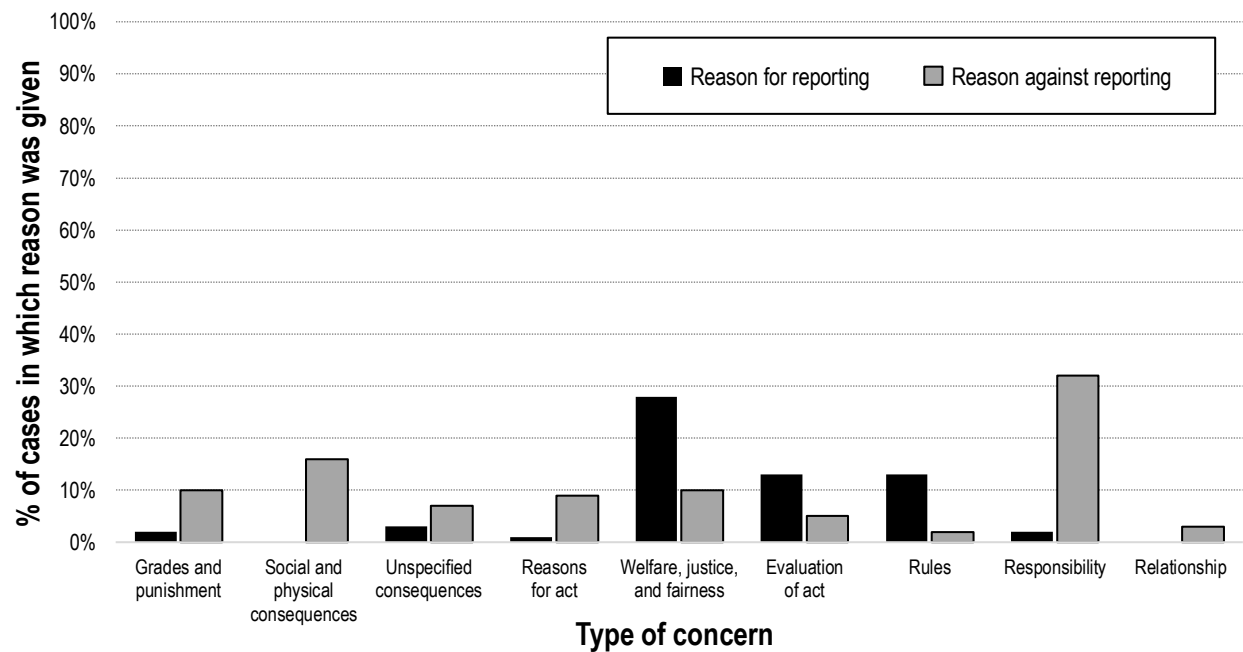


Figure S2. Frequency of reasons mentioned in open-ended responses (Study 2). Because each participant gave two open-ended responses, the y-axis represents the percentage of scenarios with each type of response.

Results

Reasoning about general cases of reporting. Reasons for and against reporting emerged in similar patterns as in Study 1 (see [Figure S2](#)).

Relation between frequency of statement in Study 1 and relative impact of manipulation in Study 2. There was a moderate positive correlation between the mitigating factors mentioned in Study 1 (% of participants mentioning) and the average changes in Study 2 participant decisions (from their baseline choice) in the *cheating* condition ($r = .41$), but no such relation was found in the *plagiarism* condition ($|r| < .01$).

Situational variability. [Figure S3](#) shows the complete case graph, based on 103 survey responses (including incomplete responses, shown in white). The case graph is ordered such that the participants who opted to report in the most scenarios are presented at the bottom. Scenarios in which more participants would report are toward the right side. [Table S8](#) lists each of the scenarios, with their associated numbers. Each cell represents a participant's reported likelihood of reporting in a given scenario. Darker cells indicate higher likelihood of reporting, and lighter cells indicate lower likelihood of reporting.

Participant decisions of whether to report varied considerably across scenarios, and many made use of the full range of the scale (0 to 10), suggesting that a general question of whether a student would report—without context—could miss out on key nuances and variability.

As stated in the main text, participants were more likely to decide to report in situations that involved a reason for reporting rather than a reason against reporting. To take a closer look at the types of situations in which students would be willing, or unwilling, to report, coded features of the scenarios (target of evaluation, relevant parties) were used as predictors of decisions to report. Models were run separately for the scenarios involving reasons for and against reporting.

Features of scenarios involving reasons to report. Participants were more likely to report in scenarios that focused on the nature of the *act* (49%, e.g., “Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing while working on something which is going to be published”) rather than the nature of *reporting* (42%, e.g., “Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing, and you would not really be doing anything wrong by reporting it”), $D(1) = 23.85, p < .001$. They were also more likely to report in situations in which the *reporter* would directly be affected or otherwise involved in the situation (67%, e.g., “Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing your work”), compared to those in which they would *not* (37%), $D(1) = 71.02, p < .001$, as well as when *other people* would be involved in the situation (64%, e.g., “Imagine you know that someone is cheating and it affects you and your classmates”), compared to when they would *not* (35%), $D(1) = 11.21, p = .001$.

Features of scenarios involving reasons against reporting. Participants were less likely to report in situations that focused on *reporting* (18%, e.g., “Imagine you know that someone is cheating and by reporting it, you would have to spend time going to academic hearings, gather evidence, or fill out paperwork”) rather than the *act of cheating* itself (26%, e.g., “Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing just a few words or sentences”), $D(1) = 30.11, p < .001$. They were less likely to report in situations that involved details about or consequences to the *cheater* (18%, e.g., “Imagine you know that someone is cheating but it is their first and only time doing so”), compared to those that did *not* (25%), $D(1) = 20.42, p < .001$. They were also less likely to report in situations involving *other people*, (20%, e.g., “Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing but it is not really your responsibility to intervene; instead, it is the responsibility of the instructor or TA”), compared to those that did *not* (23%), $D(1) = 15.61, p < .001$.

REPORTING OTHERS' MISCONDUCT

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

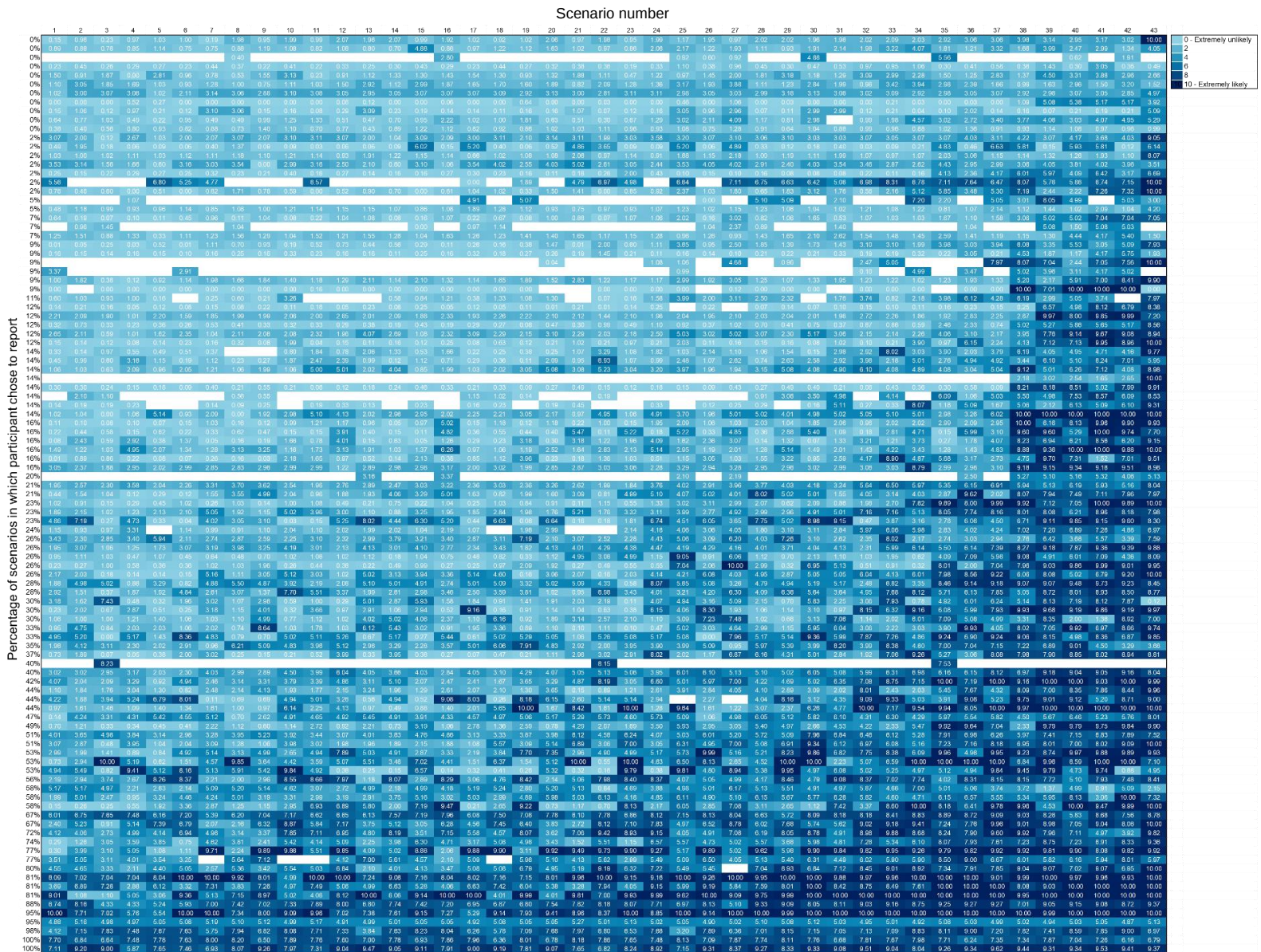


Table S8

Exact Wording of Modified Scenarios Presented in Study 2, Organized by how Many Students Would Report in Each Situation

#	Scenario Description	% would report
1	Imagine you know that someone is cheating and by reporting it, you would have to spend time going to academic hearings, gather evidence, or fill out paperwork	11%
2	Imagine you know that someone is cheating, but you are not sure whether the person faced difficulty accessing necessary information due to limited resources or inadequate teaching	11%
3	Imagine you know that someone is cheating on a homework assignment that is worth very few points.	12%
4	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing, but you are not sure whether they are intentionally plagiarizing	12%
5	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing just a few words or sentences	12%
6	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing and by reporting it, you would have to spend time going to academic hearings, gather evidence, or fill out paperwork	14%
7	Imagine you know that someone is cheating but it is their first and only time doing so	15%
8	Imagine you know that someone is cheating but it is not really your business to get involved	15%
9	Imagine you know that someone is cheating, and if they are reported they will be kicked out of school	16%
10	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing but it is not really your responsibility to intervene; instead, it is the responsibility of the instructor or TA	16%
11	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing but it is not really your business to get involved	16%
12	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing, but you are not sure what they have going on in their lives at the time	17%
13	Imagine you know that someone is cheating, and if they are reported their career will be ruined	18%
14	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing, and if they are reported they will be kicked out of school	18%
15	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing, and if they are reported their career will be ruined.	19%
16	Imagine you know that someone is cheating in a course they are taking only to fulfill a General Education (GE) requirement, not because it is relevant to their major.	19%
17	Imagine you know that someone is cheating and it does not affect you or your classmates	20%
18	Imagine you know someone is cheating but it is not really your responsibility to intervene; instead, it is the responsibility of the instructor or TA	20%
19	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing and it does not affect you or your classmates	21%
20	Imagine you know that someone is cheating, but you are not sure what they have going on in their lives at the time.	21%
21	Imagine you know that someone is cheating, and you know that if you report it people will call you a snitch	21%

22	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing an informational website, Wikipedia, or a blog	23%
23	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing, and you know that if you report it people will call you a snitch	25%
24	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing, and if they are reported they will receive a failing grade on the assignment	25%
25	If you knew that a student was cheating, would you report it to anyone?	25%
26	Imagine you know that someone is cheating, and if they are reported they will receive a failing grade on the assignment	27%
27	If you knew that a student was engaging in plagiarism, would you report it to anyone?	28%
28	Imagine you know that someone is cheating and in doing so they are breaking the rules	30%
29	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing and in doing so they are breaking the rules.	30%
30	Imagine you know that someone is cheating on a test that is worth a lot of points	31%
31	Imagine you know that someone is cheating in an upper-division class.	32%
32	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing a lot of text	34%
33	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing academically published work	37%
34	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing, and you would not really be doing anything wrong by reporting it	42%
35	Imagine you know that someone is cheating and in doing so they receive a better grade than those who worked honestly	44%
36	Imagine you know that someone is cheating, and up to that point they have been doing so continuously throughout the entire academic term	46%
37	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing and in doing so they receive a better grade than those who worked honestly	47%
38	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing while working on something which is going to be published	67%
39	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing and it affects you and your classmates	71%
40	Imagine you know that someone is cheating and it affects you and your classmates	73%
41	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing and in doing so they negatively affect the grades of you and your classmates	75%
42	Imagine you know that someone is cheating and in doing so they negatively affect the grades of you and your classmates.	75%
43	Imagine you know that someone is plagiarizing your work.	79%

Further Discussion

The findings from Study 2 confirm that students' decisions can vary greatly depending on the context of the cheating act. Across scenarios, the percent of students deciding to report ranged from 11% to 79%, and participants' ratings of their likelihood to report varied from 0.00 to 10.00.

Students were more likely to report in scenarios that focused on the nature of the act and ones that directly involved or affected themselves. Students were less likely to report in situations that focused on reporting, involved explicit consequences to the cheater, and involved other people. In many real-life situations, a multitude of these features would probably be present at the same time (e.g., the person may be only plagiarizing a small amount of text, but on work which is going to be published), highlighting the complexity of these decisions.

Overall, this study shows that students are neither categorically in favor of, nor opposed to, reporting cheating. The same group of students agreed that some situations warranted reporting, and some did not. Research focused on individual characteristics (e.g., gender,

personality)—typically presumed to be relatively stable across contexts—as determinants of reporting behavior may thus be misguided, as the findings of the present research show the great impact of context (McCabe, Butterfield, & Treviño, 2012; Miller, Murdock, Anderman, & Poindexter, 2007).

General Discussion

Further Discussion of Related Literature

Past research suggests that traditional honor codes, which include a student tribunal system to oversee cases of student cheating, are associated with lower rates of cheating (Burrus, Jones, Sackley, & Walker, 2013; McCabe & Treviño, 1993; Melendez, 1985). However, McCabe and Treviño argue that the mere existence of an honor code is not enough to reduce cheating: The key to an effective honor code is institution-wide respect and understanding for integrity (1993). By focusing on building communities with respect for academic integrity, our educational institutions may be able to better tackle the high rates of cheating which have persisted for decades. Such a solution is supported by Burrus and colleagues, who have stressed the importance of fellow students' beliefs about reporting academic integrity in influencing decisions (2013). It could be, then, that truly effective policies are those that invigorate students to hold each other accountable.

Some research suggests that bystander failure to intervene is driven by the degree of perceived group cohesion (Rutkowski, Gruder, & Romer, 1983). This might relate to previous findings of traditional honor codes reducing cheating, insofar as honor codes enhance student perceptions of closeness and increase policing among peers. Possible future investigations could examine the student's feelings of belonging and closeness with peers in predicting their tendency to report. However, such measures are difficult to obtain at the situational level, and hence would fail to capture crucial contextual variability. For instance, a student may have a relatively stable sense of belonging in their school but nevertheless decide to respond differently to different acts of cheating.

The relationship between people's beliefs and their actions has long been debated by scholars (Blasi, 1980; Pfeiffer & Sutton, 2008; Williams & Gantt, 2012). Why, for example, would people say they believe lying is wrong, but then lie anyway (Jensen, Arnett, Feldman, & Cauffman, 2002; Margolis, 1963)? Two explanations for apparent discrepancies between people's beliefs and behaviors have emerged in the literature: Theories about (1) neutralization or disengagement of values (Ariely, 2012; Bandura, 2016; Rettinger & Kramer, 2009; Sykes & Matza, 1957), and (2) moral tradeoffs and coordinating multiple concerns in multifaceted situations (Kohlberg, 1971; Nucci, 2004; Turiel, 2003; Turiel & Dahl, 2019). The complexity of students' responses supports the claim that moral judgements involve coordinating multiple concerns. Here, we propose that students decide not to report because even though they believe they should and they recognize reasons to report, the reasons against reporting outweigh the reasons in favor of reporting. In this sense, students engage in moral tradeoffs by choosing to uphold some values above others.

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Appendix

Self-Report Survey of Experiences With Plagiarism and Cheating

1. When you learned. When did you learn about plagiarism?

☐ College ☐ High school ☐ Middle school ☐ Other:

2. Writing service. How many times have you submitted someone else's writing as your own work?

e.g., paid for an essay writing service

e.g., submitted an assignment written by someone else with your own name on it

In the past year: ☐ 0 ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ Other:

In your lifetime: _____

3. Copying students. How many times have you completed an assignment using a fellow student's answers or words? (or done this for someone else)

e.g., used code from a classmate to write a program

e.g., used the multiple choice or short answer responses from another student's worksheet

In the past year: ☐ 0 ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ Other:

In your lifetime: _____

4. Copying yourself. How many times have you re-used your own written work without permission?

e.g., submitted part or all of an assignment you previously completed for a different class, without both instructors' knowledge

In the past year: ☐ 0 ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ Other:

In your lifetime: _____

5. Copying other sources. How many times have you used written work or answers from any sources other than the ones mentioned above?

e.g., copied ideas or phrases from Wikipedia or a website without acknowledgment

e.g., copied words from a professor or journal article without citing them

In the past year: ☐ 0 ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ Other:

In your lifetime: _____

6. Other. How many times have you plagiarized in ways not listed above?

In the past year: ☐ 0 ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ Other:

In your lifetime: _____

7. Unsure. Approximately how many times have you been unsure about whether something you submitted counts as plagiarism?

e.g., not sure if you had cited properly

e.g., unknowingly replicated ideas or phrases you had previously read elsewhere

In the past year: ☐ 0 ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ Other:

In your lifetime: _____