

Contract Cheating: An Inter-Institutional Collaborative SoTL Project from Alberta

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Session Overview

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Contract Cheating - Overview and background
- 3) Situating Academic Integrity within SoTL
- 4) Our Project
 - a) Design / Methods
 - b) Research Question
 - c) Results
- 5) Recommendations and Next Steps

What is contract cheating?

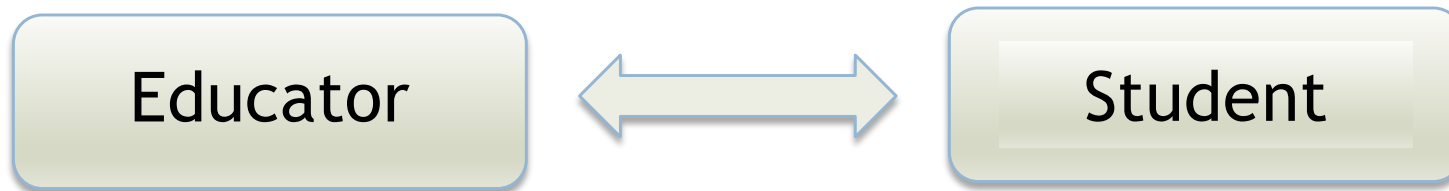
“Contract cheating' happens when a third party completes work for a student who then submits it to an education provider as their own, where such input is not permitted.” QAA, 2017, p. 1

What is contract cheating?

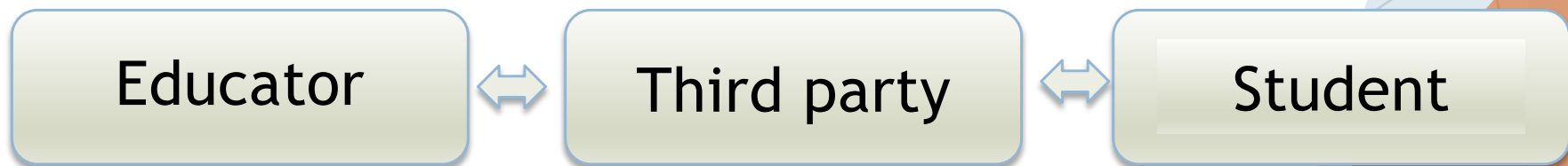
Breaches the unwritten expectations of a contract of integrity between the educator and the student.

We use the term “educator” inclusively

Expectation:



Violation:



Prevalence

Canada in top 4 countries from which students bought academic work online¹

2006

2018

Canada now tied for 2nd: top countries where students engage in contract cheating²

¹ Clarke & Lancaster, 2006

² Lancaster, 2018

Prevalence

71,000+

(Eaton, 2018)

≈ 1 in 7

(Newton, 2018)

“A small number of offenders are responsible for a very large amount of the crime.”

(Curtis & Clare, 2017, p. 117)

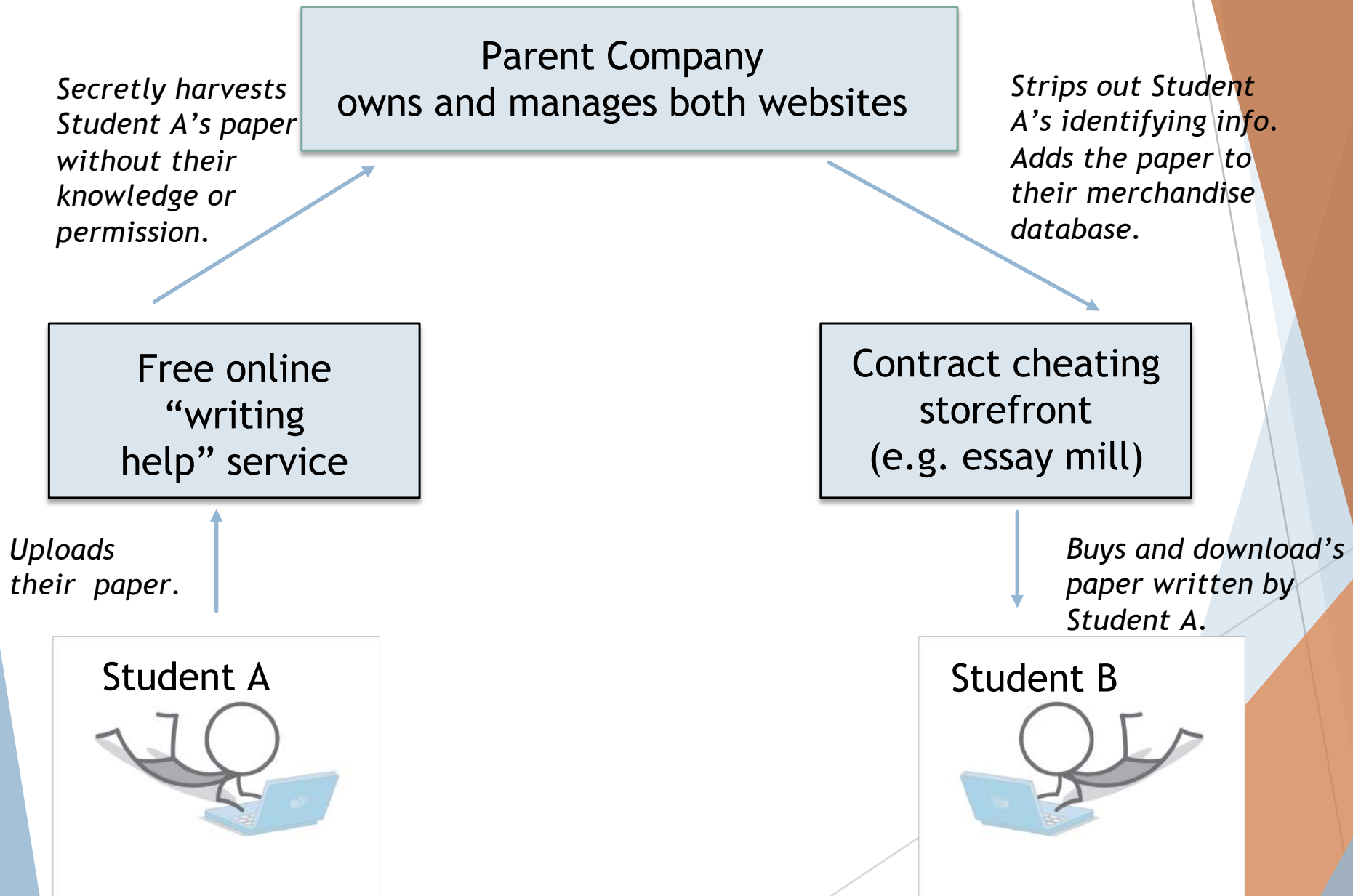
Prevalence

Contract cheating occurs the most in:

1. Business
2. Engineering
3. Science
4. Humanities
5. Education

(Curtis & Clare, 2017; Bretag, 2017)

Corporate Cheating Cartels

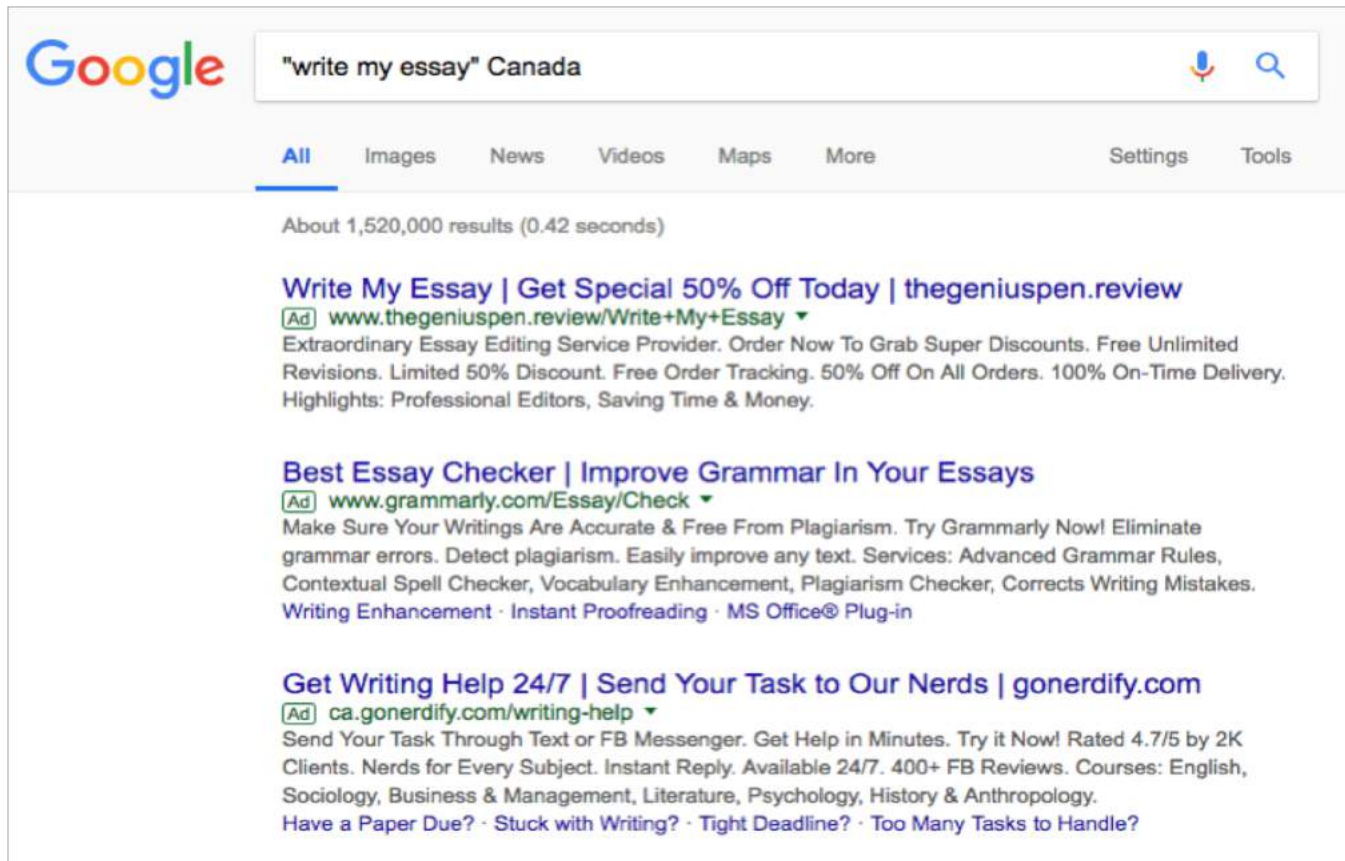


How many providers in Canada?

A Google search of “write my essay” and “Canada” (using quotation marks) rendered 1.5 million results. (Search date: June, 2018)

If even 1% of these are actual contract cheating services, that’s 15,000 businesses whose customers include our students. (Eaton, 2018)

Because these services operate mostly online, it is difficult to get accurate numbers.



Google "write my essay" Canada

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About 1,520,000 results (0.42 seconds)

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Conceptual Lenses for Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity often examined from one or more of three perspectives: as a moral issue; a policy issue or a teaching and learning issue (Adam, 2016).

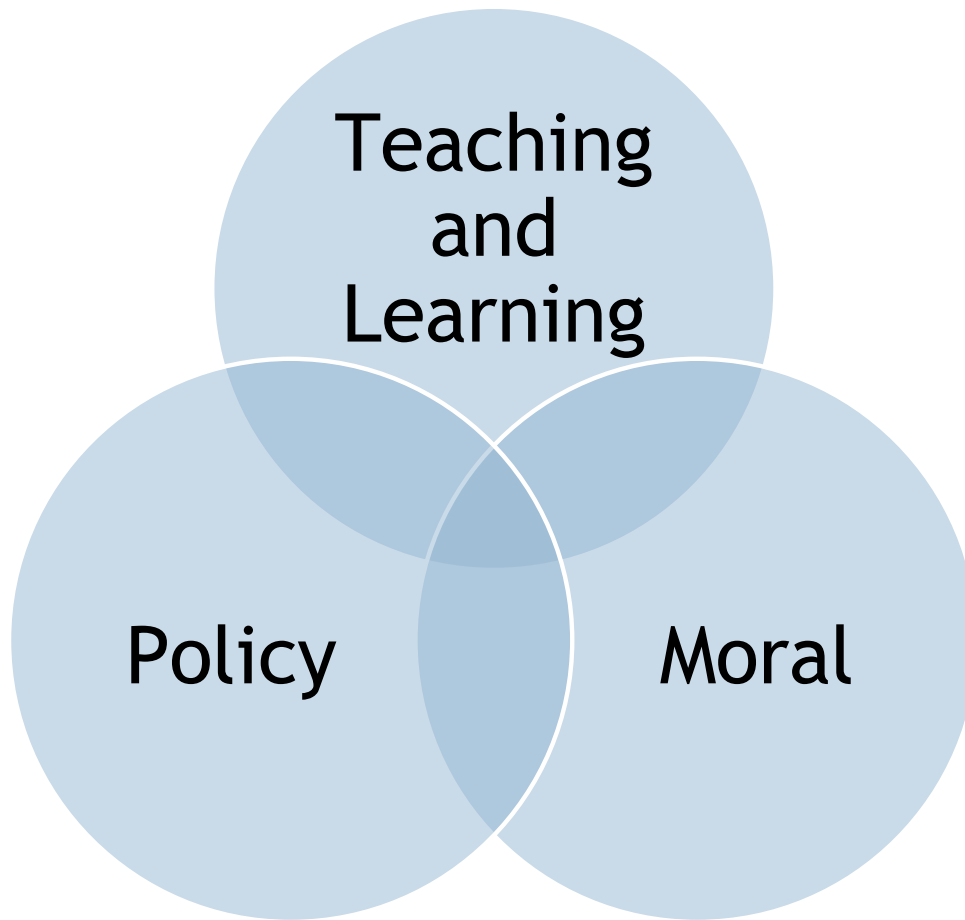


Figure 1: Conceptual Lenses for Academic Integrity, adapted from Adam (2016).

Academic Integrity as a Teaching and Learning Imperative

Academic integrity is a teaching and learning *imperative* (Bertram Gallant, 2008).

The question isn't "Why are students cheating?", but "Why aren't our students learning?" (Bertram Gallant, 2008, p. 6).

Situating Academic Integrity as SoTL

We subscribe to Fanghanel's (2013) notion of SoTL as a democratic and dialogic form of inquiry inviting multiple voices (academics, administrators, student support specialists, p. 62) that “provides spaces for *interdisciplinary* and *cross-institutional* reflection” (p. 62)

O'Brien (2008) positions SoTL research as “a kind of standing back ... in order to deliberately frame and investigate what works, and what doesn't” (p. 1).

Hubball and Pearson (2013), advocated for extending SoTL inquiry beyond individual classrooms to broader institutional contexts.

In our research, we interrogate broad institutional approaches to academic integrity in general and to contract cheating in particular.

Inter-Institutional Perspectives on Contract Cheating

Project genesis and team formation

Purpose: To compare our individual experiences of contract cheating to discover common questions, struggles and approaches to dealing with this complex breach of academic integrity.

Project Description

3 Post-secondary institutions

2 universities - University of Calgary and Mount Royal University

1 college - Bow Valley College

Perspectives from different roles

Administration

Academic Staff

Professional Staff

Qualitative research design

Narrative reflections

Institutional practices

Professional experience

Research Questions

Primary Question: How do our respective institutions address the problem of contract cheating?

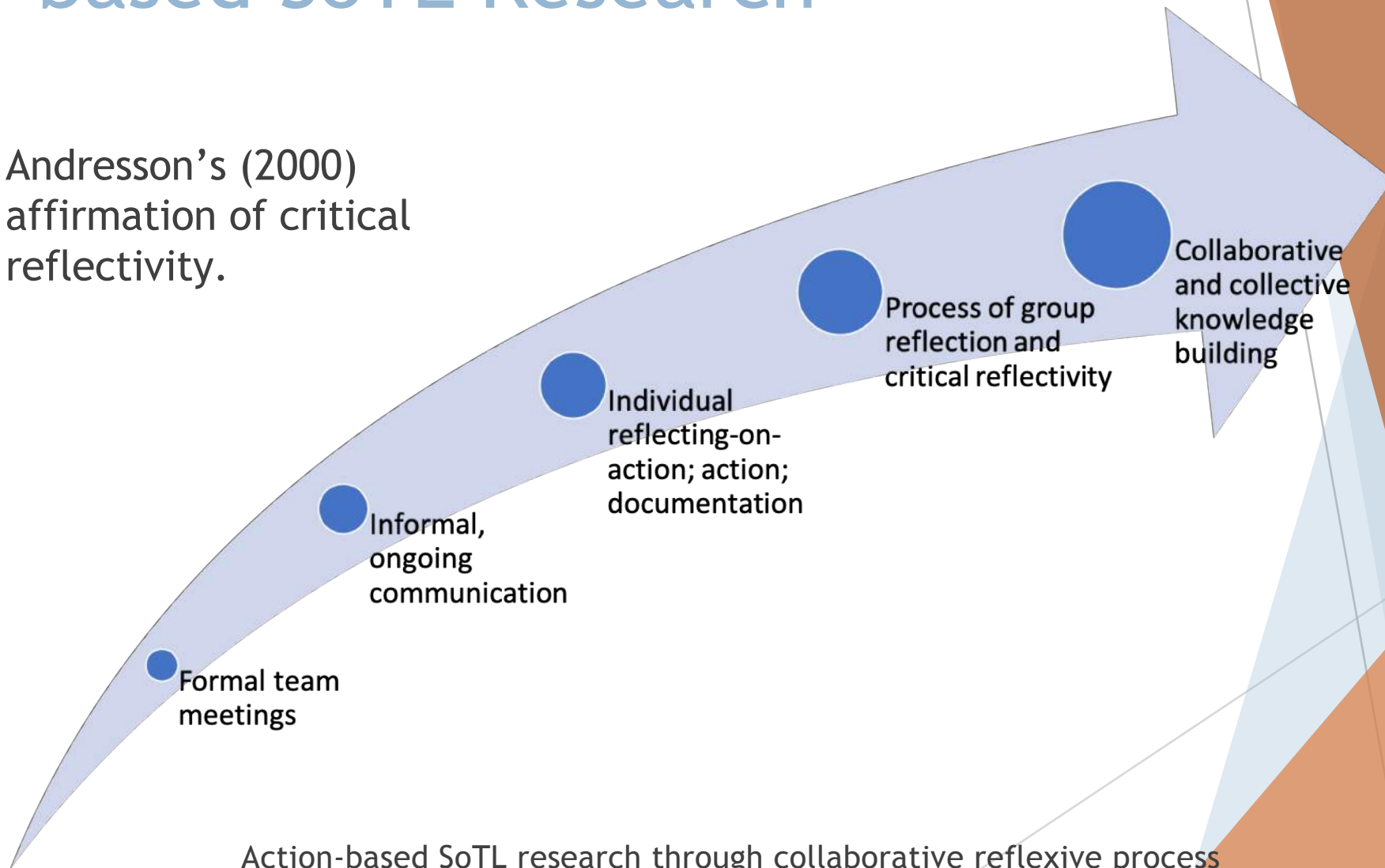
Sub-Question: How might a teaching and learning lens be explicitly used to engage in an inquiry on contract cheating?

Method

- Qualitative, action research design, with an exploratory focus
 - “Exploration is a valid and important mode of scientific inquiry...vital for discovery” (Gernsbacher, 2018, p. 3).
 - Action research as reflective inquiry for professional development and educational practice (McNiff, 2010, 2013, 2014)
- Data source: Narratives of researcher-participants
- Collaborative and interactive thematic analysis (Saldaña, 2016).

Critical reflexivity in action-based SoTL Research

Andresson's (2000) affirmation of critical reflexivity.



Action-based SoTL research through collaborative reflexive process
(Simmons, Eaton, McDermott, Jacobsen & Brown, 2017)

Findings

Key themes:

1. Types of contract cheating
2. Students
3. Awareness
4. Evidence and policy implications
5. Educational development

Types of Contract Cheating

1. Paid Source
2. Contract Collusion
3. Loyalty

Students

Motivations

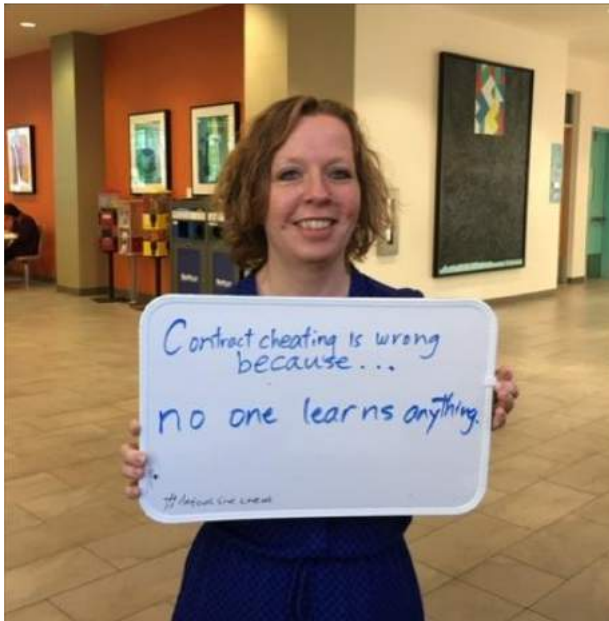
- feeling overwhelmed
- time pressure
- pressure to succeed

Previous learning experiences

- sharing through internet
- cultural experiences of academic integrity

Awareness

International Day of Action Against Contract Cheating -
October 17, 2018



Evidence and Policy Implications

“But I can’t prove it”

“How do I talk to the
student?”

“What’s our policy?”

Educational Development

Students

Faculty

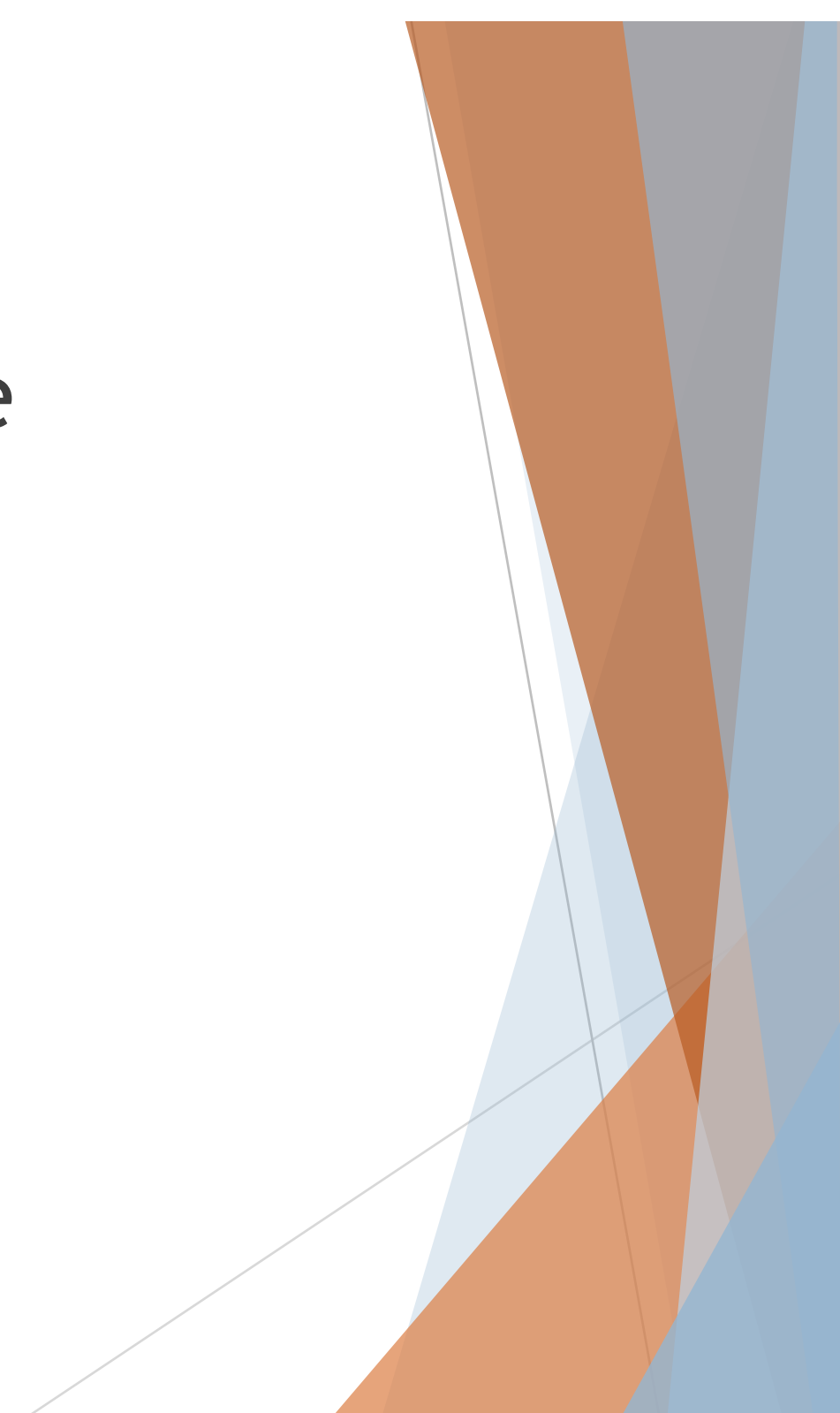


Limitations

Alberta perspective

Urban institutions

Only included staff
perspectives



Recommendations and Next Steps

- 1) Start the dialogue
 - a) With your students (with examples, if you have them)
 - b) With colleagues at your institution
 - c) Beyond your institution
- 2) Include in institutional policy. Also create student-friendly support documents.
- 3) Develop supports for faculty and staff.
- 4) International Day of Action - October 16, 2019



Canadian Symposium on Academic Integrity

A national forum to discuss academic
integrity in higher education.

GET TICKETS

April 17-18, 2019

<https://go.ucalgary.ca/Academic-Integrity.html>

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