

Chapter 27

Academic Dishonesty and Cheating: Proactive and Reactive Action Implications for Faculty and Students

Aditya Simha

Gonzaga University, USA

John B. Cullen

University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature on academic dishonesty and cheating, by defining the different kinds of cheating behaviors, and then illustrating the different factors that have an impact on cheating behaviors. The authors then offer suggestions derived from their synthesis of these studies, as to how to better react to this phenomenon and take corrective as well as proactive action, so as to be able to control and perhaps reduce instances and occurrences of academic dishonesty and cheating.

INTRODUCTION

I would prefer even to fail with honor than to win by cheating – Sophocles

If the entire world and all of its denizens were to follow and truly abide by the admirable words of Sophocles listed above, then perhaps the world would be a much nicer, pleasanter, and better place to live in. But alas, that is sadly not the case! We live in a world where there is rampant corruption,

a seemingly disdainful attitude towards ethics, and where one needs to be careful in dealings with other individuals, as it is always possible that one could end up getting fleeced if not careful in such transactions. Similarly, it becomes increasingly obvious that students who cheat in school are very likely to continue their cheating ways well into other situations, including workplace transactions (e.g. Swift & Nonis, 1998).

Unfortunately, this situation is also very rampant in colleges and universities and other such academic settings, including elementary, second-

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ary, and post-secondary educational contexts (Firmin, Burger, & Blosser, 2009). And a rather sobering statistic reveals that this trend of cheating is ever increasing rather than reducing in frequency (Firmin et al, 2009). Similarly, Iyer and Eastman (2006) mention the increasing rate of academic dishonesty, even though the ranges do seem to differ depending on the researcher/study. McCabe and Trevino (1997) offer an estimated range from about 13% to about 95%, whereas Park (2003) states that about 50% of students cheat. Kidwell, Wozniak, and Laurel (2003) and Chapman, Davis, Toy, and Wright (2004) all found that about 75% of students cheated. Nonis and Swift (1998) found a similar percentage (63%) of students cheating. McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield (2006) reported that about 56% of graduate students and 47% of undergraduate students engaged in some form of dishonest or cheating behavior.

This kind of endemic academic dishonesty and cheating is not peculiar only to a particular country, but is indeed prevalent in several different countries (spanning the globe), and in several contexts (both undergraduate and graduate students), as well as both public and private schools of all sizes (Park, 2003). For instance, Duke University shot into the public limelight in a rather unsavory fashion in 2007, after about 10% of the graduating class of 2008 was caught cheating on a final exam (Conlin, 2007; Simkin & McLeod, 2010). About, 69% of surveyed Russian business students reported having cheated (Lupton, Chapman, & Weiss, 2002), whereas Grimes (2004) reported that about 74% of undergraduate students from eight Eastern European countries (part of the erstwhile Soviet Union) had personally engaged in cheating during their college education. 84% of surveyed Slovakian students too reported that they had engaged in cheating behaviors (Lupton, Chapman, & Weiss, 2000). Gbadamosi (2004) demonstrated that a high percentage (56%) of his sample of students from Swaziland and Botswana also indicated that they were prepared to do anything to excel in exams, even if those methods were unethical and dishonest.

Students from Asian countries also demonstrate a high prevalence of engagement in academic dishonesty and cheating. Lin and Wen (2007) conducted a study of college students in Taiwan, and determined that cheating was fairly endemic and prevalent in Taiwan as well – they determined that the prevalence rate for all types of dishonest behaviors among college students in Taiwan was about 61.7%. These behaviors comprised of all possible forms of cheating, as delineated by McCabe (2009). Similarly, in a study of Japanese students, about 55.4% of them reported that they engaged in cheating on tests (Diekhoff, LaBeff, Shinohara, & Yusukawa, 1999). Similarly, Chang (1995) and Shen (1995) demonstrated a high prevalence in cheating behaviors associated with Taiwanese students. There is some evidence to attest that Iranian students see cheating in their academic studies as acceptable (Yahyanejad, 2000; Mirshekary & Lawrence, 2009).

In a business school and business student context too, this phenomenon of academic dishonesty is rather prevalent. Levy and Rakovski (2006) attest that business students are very dishonest when compared with students of other disciplines. Also, it appears that business students or students intending to enter business fields are more likely than other groups of students to engage in cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty (McCabe & Trevino, 1995). Premeaux (2005) found that students from Tier 2 AACSB accredited business schools as well as Tier 1 AACSB accredited business schools are both likely to cheat, however they cheat in different ways. Klein, Levenburg, McKendall, & Mothersell (2007) also found that business school students tended to have more lax attitudes towards what constitutes cheating.

These different statistics all point to a disturbing phenomenon, as one can easily envisage these students who cheat and engage in dishonesty will very likely go on to engage in similar acts of dishonesty. This has been corroborated by research (Shipley, 2009; Smyth, Davis, & Kroncke, 2009; Swift & Nonis, 1998). For instance, Sims (1993) found a high degree of correlation between cheat-

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