Academic Cheating in High School and College: What the Research is Telling Us

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Overview

- Define Academic Dishonesty
- Describe the Problem
- Review Research Findings
- Discuss Practical Implications
- Identify Resources

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty refers to any of the following acts, when committed by an individual in an academic setting:

- Cheating

- Plagiarism

- Fabrication

- Facilitation

Source: University of Maryland College Park's Code of Academic Integrity
                (http://www.inform.umd.edu/jpo)

Practical Problem

Practical problem

- – Cheating is prevalent at all grade levels
- – Students and teachers don't agree
- – Technology makes cheating easier
- – Cheating is habit forming and leads to future unethical behaviors
- – Accountability is important but the process is often tedious and pits teachers against students (and at times parents)

Research Problem

Research problem

- Lack of an overarching theoretical base/conceptual framework

- Continued use of unsophisticated methods/analyses

- Difficulty making meaningful comparisons across studies due to difference in definitions of key terms and methodology.

Study 1:
Critical Transitions

Study Overview:

- Explored academic dishonesty across the transition from high school to college.

- Conducted in 3 Phases:

  - Phase 1: Pre-test questionnaire of a cohort of 240 high school seniors.

  - Phase 2: Post-test questionnaire administered to 36 students after competing their first year of college.

  - Phase 3: Qualitative follow-up interviews of 5 students during the fall of their sophomore year in college.

Study 1: Critical Transitions

Study Findings:

- Students viewed teachers actions as important
- Students suggested that teachers should:
  - Explicitly state what does and does not constitute academic dishonesty. Take the time to help them understand.
  - Avoid assigning "busy work."
  - Create testing climates that make it difficult to cheat (e.g., using multiple versions of exams, assigning seats, closely monitoring students during exams).
  - Avoid repeating major assignments from year to year.
  - Understand how students use technology to cheat and make it difficult for them to do so.
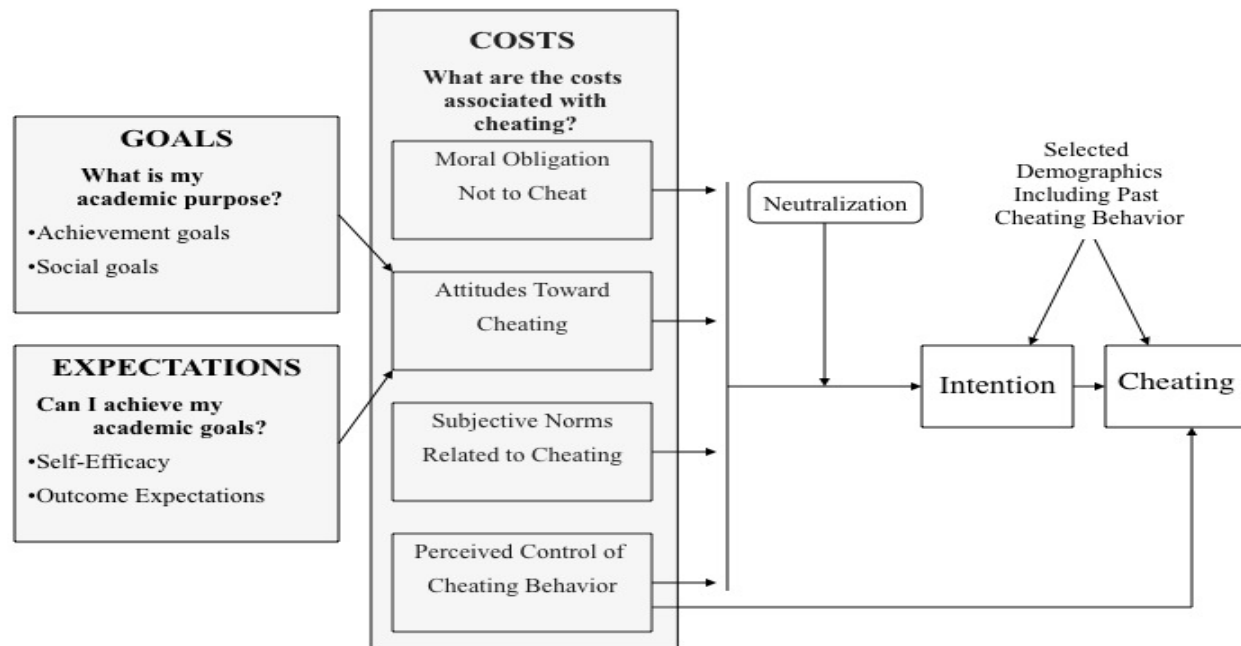
Study 2: Motivational Predictors

Study Overview:

- Explored goals, expectations, and costs as possible motivational predictors of academic dishonesty among first-year college students.

- Conducted in 1 Phase:

  - Quantitative, web-based study of 4,462 first year students at a large public research institution.

Study 2: Motivational Predictors

Theoretical Framework:

Model derived from combining the work of Murdock and Anderman (2006) and Harding et al. (2007).

Study 2: Motivational Predictors

Findings:

- Prevalence
- Demographics
  - Males
  - Extracurricular participation
  - Discipline
- Past cheating predicts future cheating
  - High school cheating predicts future college cheating
  - Homework cheating predicts future homework cheating
  - Test cheat cheating predicts future test cheating
- Cheating is a planned and rational behavior

Study 2: Motivational Predictors

Findings:

- Predictors of attitudes toward cheating
  - Academic and social goals
  - Self-efficacy
- Predictors of intention to cheat and actual cheating frequency
  - Attitudes
  - Subjective Norms
  - Perceived Behavioral Control
  - Moral Obligation

Study 2: Motivational Predictors

Implications

- Motivation is important for understanding the problem of cheating.
- Academic goals and social goals influence students' decisions.
  - Promote intrinsic benefits of coursework and learning.
- Attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and moral obligation are important factors in predicting intention to cheat and actual cheating behavior. Teachers should consider ways to influence these factors when they are planning and administering assignments and tests.
  - Talk with students about the benefits of learning and acting with integrity.
  - Help debunk myths about peer norms.
  - Encourage collaboration and group learning opportunities.
  - Discuss intellectual property and why it should be protected.
  - Discuss negative consequences of cheating (intrinsic and extrinsic).

Resources

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John Templeton Foundation

- Grant Funding
- Online Discussions
- Educational Resources & Reports

The Center for Academic Integrity

www.academicintegrity.org

- CAI Research
- Educational Resources
- Fundamental Values Project
- Tips & Tools for Developing Honor Codes
- Resource Database
- Member Institutions

References

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Murdock, T., & Anderman, E. (2006). Motivational perspectives on student cheating: Toward an integrated model of academic dishonesty. *Educational Psychologist, 41(3)*, 129-145.