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INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Academic Dishonesty

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The data in this special issue are both encouraging and discouraging. On the positive side, researchers are making theoretical breakthroughs into the psychology of the academic cheater, which may result in practical interventions. Yet the studies illustrate the sheer magnitude of the problem and the resources needed to address unethical behavior among the younger members of the American academe. In short, this special issue shows that the "Internet revolution" facilitates new types of academic dishonesty (Sisti, this issue; Stephens, Young, & Calabrese, this issue); that academic cheating is often an intentional, planned act that results from a Machiavellian tendency to neutralize moral sanctions against cheating (Harding, Mayhew, Finelli, & Carpenter, this issue); that motivations to cheat differ across students (Davy, Kincaid, Smith, & Trawick, this issue; Wowra, this issue); and that academic cheating is a symptom of a larger problem (Lovett-Hooper, Komarraju, Weston, & Dollinger, this issue; Wowra, this issue).

ONLINE TECHNOLOGY, OFFLINE MORALITY

The ease and efficiency of the Internet cuts both ways in academia. Templeton scholars Dominic Sisti and Jason Stephens show that when students use online technologies, this often results in moral behavior going offline. Sisti documents the various excuses and justifications that high school students use to neutralize their academic cheating. The most common reason for engaging in online, "cut-and-paste" cheating is a lack of time, suggesting that students require better time management strategies to avoid academic shortcuts. Stephens and his colleagues compare three types of

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cheaters, including "conventional" paper-and-pencil cheaters, "digital-only" cheaters, and cheaters who use both methods. Digital-only cheaters are rare, suggesting that the Internet facilitates, but does not cause, students to cheat on their schoolwork. Students who use both traditional and digital methods to cheat also perceive the least moral responsibility for their unethical behavior.

A MACHIAVELLIAN WORLDVIEW

Templeton scholar Trevor Harding and his colleagues delve into the intentional, planned machinations of the college cheater. Based on a modified Theory of Planned Behavior (Azjen, 2002), Harding conceptualizes a psychological model of the academic cheater based in the student's moral reasoning ability. Harding shows that, controlling for contextual factors, undergraduates enrolled in engineering courses are more likely to cheat relative to their peers in the humanities, suggesting some unique challenges to curb cheating in the "hard" sciences. He concludes that "students who exhibit a more positive attitude toward cheating, who operate in an environment with less restrictive norms against cheating, and who have a weak sense of moral obligation to avoid cheating will be more likely to cheat in a given situation."

STUDENT MOTIVATIONS AFFECT ACADEMIC CHEATING

Continuing with the Machiavellian theme, students who regard their education as a means to an end, such as a high-paying job, are more likely to cheat relative to students who view education as a reward in and of itself (Davy et al., this issue). Therefore, pedagogies that stimulate intrinsic interests in class materials should reduce cheating behavior. Extrinsic motivation can also be social in nature. Students who are motivated to avoid embarrassment appear to be more likely to cheat relative to students who are relatively free of symptoms of social anxiety (Wowra, this issue). In addition, students who place high importance on their moral identities are less likely to recall cheating relative to students who regard moral prescriptions as relatively unimportant to their sense of self.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY IS A SYMPTOM OF A LARGER PROBLEM

Academic cheating is not an isolated behavioral pattern. Students who cheat in high school tend to cheat in college. Students who cheat in college may be more likely to violate workplace ethics (e.g., Harding, Carpenter, Finelli, & Passow,

2004; this relatively unexplored issue requires further investigation). The cycle of unethical behavior may begin early in a student's educational career and persist into his or her professional career, where taking shortcuts and bending the rules as an engineer or doctor result in life-threatening ramifications. Blankenship and Whitley (2000) first described this troubling possibility a few years ago in the pages of *Ethics & Behavior.* Data in this special issue replicate their findings. Students who engage in academic cheating also report engaging, and predict future engagement, in other forms of unethical behavior, including lying, stealing, cheating on romantic partners, and violating other societal norms (Lovett-Hooper et al., this issue; Wowra, this issue).

This finding certainly does not explain why students cheat in their classes. This finding does provide, however, a fresh perspective. Academic cheating is often one behavioral pattern in a student's general repertoire of unethical actions to get what he or she wants (e.g., approval, public achievement). The practical implications of this finding are clear. Interventions for academic dishonesty cannot treat the problem in isolation, because a growing number of studies show that many students regard academic cheating as a functional way to operate in the world. It is important to remember that today's students are tomorrow's instructors, doctors, and engineers. To combat this Machiavellian philosophy, parents, professors, and administrators must generate reasons why it is in a student's best interest to maintain his or her academic integrity and reject this expedient philosophy.

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