

# The seriousness of academic dishonesty and cheating



Failure to provide proper citation on the requirements of Professor James in History 132 is plagiarism. Plagiarism and all other forms of academic dishonesty and cheating have severe repercussions on the character of the student, on the integrity of the academic institution, on the future milieu he will be joining up and in general, on the culture he participates in. Analyzing the reasons as to why a student cheats will help elucidate the inquiry.

In their research on student behavior and academic set up, Kim Pulvers and George M. Diekhoff give two general sets of factors which are influential to the students' conduct. First are individual psychological influences such as "the need for social approval," "a sense of internal social control," "tendency to rationalize," and one's level of maturity (488-489). Using the data of Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff, and Clark (1986), they establish that in virtue of some "deterrents to cheating," those who do not cheat are more mature than those who do, as dishonest students are more concerned with punishment than their moral sensibility (488).

Second are environmental factors like peer pressure, "grade pressure," classroom structures and number of students per class, recycling of test papers by instructors and certain types of examinations that lead the students to cheat (489). Pulvers and Diekhoff believe that the more the teacher is impersonal in his approach to his students—be that because of the classroom structure or because of the professor's style, the more the students are inclined to cheat (495). The latter is avoidable and can easily be addressed by those in the academe.

The former, however, is more intricate and requires collaboration from both the institution and those under it, namely the students. Since the second set of factors are institutional ones, our inquiry about the seriousness of academic dishonesty and cheating begins with the psychological or “internal” factors Pulvers and Diekhoff provided. An act like cheating destroys firstly, nobody and nothing else than the individual himself. It must be considered, nonetheless, that a plagiarist or a cheater is not simply born out of a situation wherein there is an opportunity to commit such crime.

He or she is formed to become one by various other psychological and external factors which may be even prior to his or her pursuit of higher education. Be that as it may, since education is first and foremost formation not only of intellect but also of character, what this man or woman will become in the future after being educated is determined by the decisions he or she makes in the course of his or her years in college. This I will demonstrate later on. Immediately after the agent, the educational institution is the second casualty of academic dishonesty.

Not only are acts like cheating and plagiarism detrimental to the interests of the institution in authentically educating an individual, but also more importantly, they pose a threat to the intellectual integrity of the institution. That is why an “honor code” is essential to a college or university, both in deterring dishonest behaviors and establishing a culture of integrity among its students (Bolin 111; McCabe and Trevino 394). More than a responsibility, integrity is a call that the institution needs always to respond to.

If they will not foster an environment of honesty and honor, they will not have the moral authority to educate their students. Furthermore, their reputation as an institution will be greatly affected, and thus would result to the loss of their credibility among other institutions and more importantly, future employers of their students. The most serious effect of academic dishonesty is on the future working milieu where the student will soon participate after graduation. It is not difficult to see the connection between academic dishonesty and dishonesty when one begins to work.

The reason is quite simple. Sarath Nonis and Cathy Owens giving reference to R. L. Sims research on business students say that if cheaters find their way in school, they might have the perception that they can also do the same at work (71). Here, dishonesty can now be properly called “ crimes. ” The research of Nonis and Owens yielded an outstanding affirmation of the link between work ethics and college morality: “ Once an individual forms the attitude that cheating is acceptable behaviour, he or she is likely to use this behaviour, not only in the educational arena but also in other areas (75).

A correlate research of Gale M. Lucas and James Friedrich yields the almost same result such that they consider the classroom as the “ academic workplace of students (30). ” Likewise in their research, Trevor S. Harding, Donald D. Carpenter, Cynthia J. Finelli and Honor J. Passow affirms and also hypothesizes that previous behaviors of individuals would likely lead to their repetition in the future. Hence, there is a deterministic link to cheating in class and stealing pencils at work!

The U. S. Chamber of Commerce reported \$50 Billion losses due to petty dishonest behaviors of their employees (Nonis and Owens 71). This is the serious repercussion of a dishonest crime which seems to be at first harmless. If not averted, educational institutions will continue to produce, not highly-skilled graduates which they expect, but criminals who will perpetuate a culture of corruption. If not averted, i. e. , if moral formation is not fostered by the educational institution by its honor code and by its being intent on implementing its rules, the damage will extend beyond the education house.

And just as it is not difficult for us to see the connection between dishonesty in school and petty crimes at work, it is also not impossible to connect them to socio-economic and political ethics. Nonis and Swift calls for “ a university-wide climate of academic integrity” which involves the faculty and the students (75). If such a climate is present and perceptible for the students, then they might realize that cheating is not an option and in doing so, they might form a character with integrity when they join up the corporate world (Sims).

And truly, this entails a conversion on the part of the student, since he or she will be the final produce of the educational endeavor. And ultimately, the quality of the institution, the productivity of the company, and the viability of a country’s economy is heavily reliant on the integrity of the skilled. On a personal note, having committed an inadvertent plagiarism on my work is a blatant expression of shortsightedness. I have not been attentive to the intricacies of such an act, however small or insignificant it may be.

Nonetheless, I accept that human nature dictates our predilection to pursue proximate things instead of the far-fetched, but of course, this is not a reason to be careless. An act such as inadvertent plagiarism leaves a mark to my character, as a person and as a student bent on intellectual pursuit. It made me reflect, not only about what I have done, but who I become. For truly acts can easily be forgotten, but character remains. And indeed, it is character that build societies and influences cultures.

An act of dishonesty has a ripple effect on intertwined aspects of my life, of the institution and of the society as a whole. This make me feel relevant, yet more cautious in everything that I do. Since my act does not only involve myself but necessarily involves others along the way, I am held responsible for all that I do. The seriousness of academic dishonesty and cheating rests on the capacity of these acts to pervade not just aspects of my life, but also the macro and cultural level itself.