Reviewer: Andrea Bustamante
Date: 11/20/14
Updated: 12/10/14

Study Summary Form Fields

I. Citation Info


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Year of publication
2012

Title of Study

*An organizational systems approach to the causes of academic cheating: Interactions among rule clarity, purpose, and role in school*. Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences.

Source of Study
ProQuest Information & Learning, US.

Volume
N/A

Issue
N/A

Pages
N/A

Keywords
N/A

Abstract
Academic cheating attracts considerable attention as a problem that appears to undermine society’s effort to prepare young people for responsible civic participation. Despite intense scrutiny, researchers continue to debate its causes. This investigation tested the application of an organizational systems theoretical approach to cheating. The experimental design included mixed methods and a sample involving grade 7-12 students, teachers, and parents in one international school. Participants were randomly assigned to one of six versions of an investigator-devised hypothetical collaborative learning scenario. Each version of the scenario varied according to three levels of rule clarity and two levels of purpose. Survey item one asked participants to read the scenario and rate whether or not they thought cheating had occurred. Survey item two asked participants to report a reason for the rating judgment by selecting from five button-box options and/or writing in their own open-ended comment. Separate analyses of variance were conducted for the rating data. Results showed that the rule clarity variable had a significant effect on teacher (not student or parent) judgments and the purpose variable had a significant effect on parent (not student or teacher) judgments. An interaction effect was found for the teacher data set. A content analysis of the follow-up responses found that four factors accounted for rating judgments: the clarity of rules, the purpose of the task, the nature of student collaboration, and school policy. The groups consistently reported that the attribution of cheating depended on the teacher’s rule communication. Unclear rules can lead to a gray area in the interpretation of student intentions and behaviors. The role of grades is a further source of confusion. Findings support the theory that academic cheating has roots in the social environment of schooling. School leaders need to ensure that all community members understand and are in agreement about academic expectations.

II. Study Description

Intervention Description
- Name of the program/study condition: “organizational systems approach”
- Main purpose or general description:
  - Different potential cheating scenarios based on three variables: 1) level of rule clarity (clear/unclear/no rules), 2) level of purpose (performance/mastery goals orientation), and 3) grade level in high school (grades 7-8/9-10/11-12).
- Theoretical background:
  - Organizational systems theoretical approach.
- Components: N/A
- Previous studies / evaluations: N/A

Implementation Elements
Content elements:
- Academic dishonesty
Pedagogical strategies:
N/A
Research Question(s) / Hypotheses
“For each set of school community members (students, teachers, and parents), is there a relationship between conditions of rule clarity, the purpose of a learning activity, and judgments of whether academic cheating occurred in a collaborative learning situation?” (p. 25).

Research Methods
Sample Description:
- Total N final sample: n = 221
  - 76 students out of 412 total population of 7th-12th grade students
  - 46 teachers out of 55 teachers who taught 7th-12th grades
  - 99 parents out of 427 who could be contacted
- Composition:
  - Gender: N/A
  - Location: Nairobi, Kenya
  - Ages: students from 7th to 12th grades (ages not specified), teachers, parents.
  - Ethnicity: school serves children of approximately ninety different countries (parents are mostly Americans, Western expatriates, or Kenyans who work for governmental or international organizations). Teachers are mostly Americans, followed by a smaller percentage of Kenyans, Canadians, British, and French.
  - SES: N/A
  - Special education: N/A
  - Family composition: N/A
  - Other: non-profit foundation co-owned by the government of the US and Canada.

Measures:
- Self-report questionnaire included:
  - Demographic data.
  - Cheating: participants were asked whether cheating had occurred in their assigned scenario (5-point Likert scale).
  - Factors that contributed to cheating: participants were offered six optional factors that could contribute to cheating behavior during the assigned scenario.

Procedures:
- Design:
  - Experimental design.
- Times of assessment: assessment after intervention.
- Assignment method:
  - Level of assignment: individual.
  - All 7th-12th grade students, teachers and parents of the school were invited to participate. Only individuals who volunteered participated in the study. Participants were randomly assigned to experimental condition.
Research results

1. Intervention effects (ANOVA rule clarity x purpose interactions):
   - For students:
     o Overall ANOVA: clarity of rules, purpose of learning, and interaction between the two variables did not have significant effects on students’ perceptions of academic cheating.
   - For teachers:
     o Overall ANOVA: there was a significant effect for the rule clarity variable but not for the purpose variable. A significant interaction effect was found (greater rule clarity effect in one purpose condition than the other).
     o Post hoc analysis: ratings of the “high rule clarity” condition were significantly higher than the “no rules” condition. Interaction effect occurred within the “mastery condition” and not the “performance condition.”
     o Nonparametric tests (Kruskal-Wallis, Mann-Whitney tests): teachers were more likely to report cheating in a mastery condition with clear rules than in a mastery situation with no rules.
   - For parents:
     o Overall ANOVA: there was a significant effect for the purpose variable (higher ratings at the “performance condition” than the “mastery condition”) but not for the clarity of rules variable. No interaction was found between the variables.

2. Factors that contributed to cheating:
   - Four main issues accounted for cheating: rule clarity, purpose, student collaboration, and school policy.

Summary of results

1. “Given that each experiment produced different results, group membership appeared to determine whether the organizational systems variables affected people’s judgment of what constitutes cheating” (p. 49).
2. “A positive relationship was found between the rule clarity of a task and teacher (but not student and parent) perceptions of what constitutes cheating” (p. 49).
3. “A positive relationship was found between the purpose of a task and parent (but not student and teacher) perceptions of what constitutes cheating” (p. 49).
4. “Rule clarity and purpose interacted to affect teacher (but not student and parent) judgments of what constitutes cheating” (p. 49)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTCOME VARIABLE</th>
<th>DIRECTION</th>
<th>SIGNIFICANCE</th>
<th>P VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheating (students; rule clarity x purpose)</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Non-significant</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Study limitations
• Sample from a single culturally diverse international school
• Volunteer sample.
• Modest sample size.
• Study excluded other specific situations in which cheating may occur.

Outcome Variables Taxonomy
• Cheating

Program Association
N/A