Chapter 3

A Cross-Cultural Exploration of Academic Dishonesty:
Current Challenges, Preventive Measures, and Future Directions

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ABSTRACT

Academic dishonesty (AD) continues to be of great concern in higher education (HE). In this chapter, the authors review literature in this area, with a particular emphasis on preventive interventions. In recent years, with the dramatic increase of international students in HE, the authors also address how cultural diversity may further complicate this issue. A current study of cheating behaviors is discussed comparing a sample of undergraduate college students from the United States (US) with a sample of undergraduate college students from China. With reference to those results, the authors then propose intervention strategies for reducing AD based on the literature and results of this comparative study.

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A robust body of literature—accumulated over approximately the last 30 years—has led to a number of insights regarding many and varied aspects of AD (e.g., Diekhoff, LaBeff, Clark, Williams, Francis, & Haines, 1996; Diekhoff, LaBeff, Shinohara, & Yasukawa 1999; Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff, & Clark, 1986; McCabe, Butterfield, & Treviño, 2012; Stiles, Wong, & LaBeff, 2017; Vandehey, Diekhoff, & LaBeff, 2007). Ongoing efforts remain directed at identifying and intervening in areas such as predictor variables, as well as deterrent and preventive methods aimed at reducing levels of AD or ‘cheating’ (these terms are used interchangeably) at the tertiary-level (Davis, Drinan, & Bertram Gallant, 2009). Additionally, researchers have begun to investigate these areas from multicultural perspectives (Rawwas, Al-Khatib, & Vitell, 2004), as the percentage of international students has increased considerably over the past decade (Anderson, 2016). In reviewing recent works, however, there continues to be a significant need for understanding multicultural influences that may affect student behaviors that result in AD.

For the purpose of this chapter, the authors use the term ‘academic dishonesty’ to refer to any dishonest or cheating behavior in academia e.g., plagiarizing assignment papers and cheating in examinations. In this chapter, we first review the literature on AD in HE, and discuss the discrepancy between the high prevalence of AD and an abundance of proposed intervention strategies aimed at minimizing such negative behaviors. We then account for this discrepancy by pointing to challenges and difficulties in the intervention of AD. Collected from a state-supported university in the US and a public university in an Eastern-Central coastal province in China, our survey data is introduced and analyzed. Finally, we provide our own recommendations for more robust preventive measures to combat AD.

BACKGROUND

Academic Dishonesty: The Scope of The Problem

Investigations into AD or cheating in HE over the past three decades has provided valuable insights and understanding into this problem. Nevertheless, it continues to be a serious concern in academia. McCabe et al. (2012) reported that despite observations of some changes in the types of cheating over their two decade-long investigations, more than two thirds of the students in their latest sample continued to admit to having engaged in AD behaviors (p. 71). However, not all studies in this
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