Who’s Cheating Whom? (#)
17. This is also true of international rankings of student performance. Even putting aside the question of whether international comparisons are meaningful, or even fair, what do these rankings tell us? Are they telling us something about the quality of education in a particular country? Or are they more about the ability of the country's students to perform under standardized testing conditions? It's important to remember that these rankings are influenced by a variety of factors, including the quality of the school system, the wealth of the country, and the cultural values placed on education.


40. For this reason, it is important to consider the context in which cheating occurs. If students feel that cheating is a necessary tool for success, they may be more likely to engage in it. Similarly, if students feel that the rules are unfair or if they believe that the teacher is not qualified to judge their work, they may be more likely to cheat. It is important to note that these factors do not necessarily cause cheating, but they can contribute to its likelihood.

45. The problem, however, is that, aside from the technical aspects of the group project, the default position in American classrooms—particularly where homework and tests are concerned—is reflected in familiar stories heard from elementary school students: “I just can’t do the work!” or “I don’t understand it!” or “I’m not good at math!” For students who have grown up with this message, cheating is simply an extension of the attitude that they are not good enough. In this sense, cheating is a symptom of the larger problem of educational failure. If schools focus on relative achievement and lead students to do the same, it may be because they exist in a society that rewards success over effort and emphasizes competition over cooperation. As Alfie Kohn has argued, “The schools promote dependence on external rewards and the belief that success is dependent on outperforming others.”


55. On this point, see E.M. Anderman, op. cit., p. 93.