

# Who's Cheating Whom?

By Alfie Kohn

An article about cheating practically writes itself. It must begin, of course, with a shocking statistic or two to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the problem, perhaps accompanied by a telling anecdote or a quotation from a shrugging student ("Well, sure, everyone does it"). This would be followed by a review of different variants of unethical behavior and a look at who is most likely to cheat. Finally, a list of ideas must be provided for how we can deter or catch cheaters, along with a stern call for greater vigilance.

Just about everyone agrees that cheating is bad and that we need to take steps to prevent it. But it is precisely this overwhelming consensus that makes me uneasy. Whenever a conclusion seems so obvious and is accepted so uncritically, it's probably time to take a fresh look. That doesn't mean we're obligated to give equal time to arguments in favor of cheating, but it may make sense to reconsider what the term actually signifies and examine what leads students to do what they're not supposed to - and what that tells us about their schooling.

In the 1970s, a social psychologist at Stanford University named Lee Ross attracted some attention (at least within his field) by coining the term "fundamental attribution error." He defined this as a tendency to "underestimate the impact of situational factors and to overestimate the role of dispositional factors in controlling behavior." [1] Ross was summarizing what a number of experiments had already demonstrated: We frequently pay so much attention to character, personality, and individual responsibility that we overlook how profoundly the social environment affects what we do and who we are.

There are surely examples of this error to be found everywhere, but it may be particularly prevalent in a society where individualism is both a descriptive reality and a cherished ideal. We Americans are stubbornly resistant to the simple truth that another eminent social psychologist, Philip Zimbardo, recently summarized in a single sentence: "Human behavior is more influenced by things outside us than inside." [2] Specifically, we're apt to assume that people who commit crimes are morally deficient, that the have-nots in our midst are lazy (or at least insufficiently resourceful), that children who fail to learn simply aren't studying hard enough (or have unqualified teachers). In other words, we treat each instance of illegality, poverty, or academic difficulty as if it had never happened before and as if the individual in question was acting out of sheer perversity or incompetence.

Cheating is a case in point because most discussions of the subject focus on - which is to say, attribute the problem to - the cheaters themselves. The dominant perspective on the issue, as educational psychologist Bruce Marlowe recently remarked, "is all about 'Gotcha!'" [3] This continues to be true even though we've known for quite some time that the environment matters at least as much as individual character when trying to predict the occurrence of various types of

cheating. Nearly 80 years ago, in a study that has come to be regarded as a classic work of social science, a group of researchers at Teachers College, Columbia University, investigated almost 11,000 children between the ages of eight and sixteen over a period of five years and found that “even slight changes in the situation affect individual behavior in unpredictable ways.” As a result, the correspondence between what any given child would do in two different circumstances was “lower than would be required for accurate prediction of individual behavior.” Cheating, the researchers concluded, “is as much a function of the particular situation in which [the student] is placed as it is of his own inner experience and training, his general ideas and ideals, his fears, ambition, and purposes.”[4]

A fair amount of research has accumulated since the publication of that report to illuminate the situations in which students are most likely to cheat and to help us understand the reasons they do so. We’ve learned, first of all, that when teachers don’t seem to have a real connection with their students, or when they don’t seem to care much about them, students are more inclined to cheat.[5] That’s a very straightforward finding, and not a particularly surprising one, but if taken seriously it has the effect of shifting our attention and reshaping the discussion.

So, too, does a second finding: Cheating is more common when students experience the academic tasks they’ve been given as boring, irrelevant, or overwhelming. In two studies of ninth and tenth graders, for example, “Perceived likelihood of cheating was uniformly relatively high . . . when a teacher’s pedagogy was portrayed as poor.”[6] To put this point positively, cheating is relatively rare in classrooms where the learning is genuinely engaging and meaningful to students and where a commitment to exploring significant ideas hasn’t been eclipsed by a single-minded emphasis on “rigor.” The same is true in “democratic classes where [students’] opinions are respected and welcomed.”[7] List the classroom practices that nourish a disposition to find out about the world, the teaching strategies that are geared not to covering a prefabricated curriculum but to discovering the significance of ideas, and you will have enumerated the conditions under which cheating is much less likely to occur. (Interestingly, one of the mostly forgotten findings from that old Teachers College study was that “progressive school experiences are less conducive to deception than conventional school experiences” - a result that persisted even after the researchers controlled for age, IQ, and family background. In fact, the more time students spent in either a progressive school or a traditional school, the greater the difference between the two in terms of cheating.)[8]

Third, “when students perceive that the ultimate goal of learning is to get good grades, they are more likely to see cheating as an acceptable, justifiable behavior,” as one group of researchers summarized their findings in 2001.[9] Cheating is particularly likely to flourish if schools use honor rolls and other incentives to heighten the salience of grades, or if parents offer financial inducements for good report cards[10] — in other words, if students are not merely rewarded for academic success, but are also rewarded for being rewarded.

Grades, however, are just the most common manifestation of a broader tendency on the part of schools to value product more than process, results more than discovery, achievement more than learning. If students are led to focus on how well they’re doing more than on what they’re doing, they may do whatever they think is necessary to make it look as though they’re succeeding. Thus, a recent study of more than 300 students in two California high schools confirmed that the more classrooms drew attention to students’ academic performance, the more students “observed and engaged in various types of cheating.”[11]

The goal of acing a test, getting a good mark, making the honor roll, or impressing the teacher is completely different from - indeed, antithetical to - the goal of figuring out what makes some objects float and some sink or why the character in that play we just read is so indecisive. When you look at the kind of schooling that’s all about superior results and “raising the bar,” you tend to find a variety

of unwelcome consequences:[12] less interest in learning for its own sake, less willingness to take on challenging tasks (since the point is to produce good results, not to take intellectual risks), more superficial thinking . . . and more cheating.

That is exactly what Eric Anderman, a leading expert on the subject, and his colleagues have found. In a 1998 study of middle school students, those who “perceived that their schools emphasized performance [as opposed to learning] goals were more likely to report engaging in cheating behaviors.” Six years later, he turned his attention to the transition from eighth to ninth grade and looked at the culture of individual classrooms. The result was essentially the same: More cheating took place when teachers emphasized good grades, high test scores, and being smart. There was less cheating when they made it clear that the point was to enjoy the learning, when understanding mattered more than memorizing, and when mistakes were accepted as a natural result of exploration.[13] Interestingly, these studies found that even students who acknowledged that it’s wrong to cheat were more likely to do so when the school culture placed a premium on results.

It makes perfect sense when you think about it. Cheating can help you to get a good grade and look impressive (assuming you don’t get caught), so it’s a strategy that might well appeal to students with those goals. But it would be pointless to cheat if you were interested in the learning itself because cheating can’t help you understand an idea.[14] How, then, do students develop certain goals? What leads them to display an interest in what they’re doing as opposed to a concern about how well they’re doing it? Individual dispositions count for something; obviously all students don’t behave identically even in the same environment. But that environment – the values and policies of a classroom, a school, or a society – is decisive in determining how pervasive cheating will be.[15] It affects students’ behaviors at the moment and shapes their values and attitudes over time. What the data are telling us, like it or not, is that cheating is best understood as a symptom of problems with the priorities of schools and the practices of educators. To lose sight of that fact by condemning the kids who cheat and ignoring the context is to fall into the trap that Lee Ross warned us about.

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One major cause of cheating, then, is an academic environment in which students feel pressured to improve their performance even if doing so involves methods that they, themselves, regard as unethical. But when you look carefully at the research that confirms this discovery, you begin to notice that the worst environments are those in which the pressure is experienced in terms of one’s standing relative to others.

Competition is perhaps the single most toxic ingredient to be found in a classroom, and it is also a reliable predictor of cheating. Grades are bad enough, for example, but the practice of grading on a curve — or ranking students against one another — is much worse. Similarly, while it’s destructive to lean on students to raise their test scores, it’s even more damaging to lead them to think about how their scores compare to those of other students (in another school or another country). And while using rewards to “motivate” people is generally counterproductive,[16] the negative effects are intensified with awards – which is to say, the practice of making rewards (or recognition) artificially scarce so that students must try to triumph over one another.

Competitive schools are those where, by design, all students cannot succeed.[17] To specify the respects in which that arrangement is educationally harmful may help us understand its connections to cheating. Competition typically has an adverse impact on relationships because each person comes to look at everyone else as obstacles to his or her own success. Competition often contributes to a loss of intrinsic motivation because the task itself, or the act of learning, becomes a means to an end – the end being victory. (Competition may “motivate” some people, but only in the sense of supplying an extrinsic inducement; at best this fails to promote interest in the task, but more often

interest in the task actually diminishes.) Competition often erodes academic self-confidence (even for winners) – partly because students come to think of their competence as dependent on how many people they’ve beaten and partly because the dynamics of competition really do interfere with the development of higher-order thinking.[18] In each case, cheating becomes more likely, as students feel unsupported, uninterested, and incompetent, respectively.

In short, a competitive school is to cheating as a warm, moist environment is to mold – except that in the latter case we don’t content ourselves with condemning the mold spores for growing. Moreover, competition is the ultimate example of focusing on performance rather than on learning, so it’s no wonder that “cheating qualifies as part of the unhealthy legacy that results from having tied one’s sense of worth to achieving competitively,” as the eminent psychologist Martin Covington explained. In an early investigation, he heard echoes of this connection from the students themselves. One told him, “Kids don’t cheat because they are bad. They are afraid that they aren’t smart and what will happen if they don’t do good.” Another said that students who cheat “feel really bad but it is better than being yelled at for bad grades.” And from a third: “People cheat because they are afraid of doing poorer than other kids and feeling miserable for being different and behind. Some do it to be the best in class or move to the next group.”[19] How ironic, then, that some of the adults who most vociferously deplore cheating also support competitive practices – and confuse competitiveness with excellence – with the result that cheating is more likely to occur.

Because competition, a relentless focus on achievement, and bad pedagogy aren’t new, it stands to reason that cheating isn’t exactly a recent development either. The Teachers College group had no shortage of examples to study. In fact, Elliot Turiel compared surveys of students from the 1920s with those conducted today and found that about the same percentage admitted to cheating in both eras – an interesting challenge to those who view the past through a golden haze and seem to take a perverse satisfaction in thinking of our times as the worst ever.[20]

But let’s assume for a moment that the alarmists are right. If it’s true that cheating, or at least some versions of it, really is at an all-time high, that may well be because pressures to achieve are increasing, competitiveness is more rampant and virulent, and there is a stronger incentive to cut corners or break rules. In fact, we’re currently witnessing just such pressures not only on children but on teachers and administrators who are placed in an environment where everything depends on their students’ standardized test scores.[21]

If schools focus on relative achievement and lead students to do the same, it may be because they exist in a society where education is sometimes conceived as little more than a credentialing ritual. Schools then become, in the words of educational historian David Labaree, “a vast public subsidy for private ambition,” places where “self-interested actors [seek] opportunities for gaining educational distinctions at the expense of each other.” And if the point is just to get ahead, he continues, individuals may seek “to gain the highest grade with the minimum amount of learning.”[22] Cheating could be seen as a rational choice in a culture of warped values.

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A deep analysis of cheating may lead us to investigate not only the situations that give rise to it but the process by which we come to decide what will be classified as cheating in the first place. Even a careful examination of the social context usually assumes that cheating, almost by definition, is unethical. But perhaps things are more complicated. If cheating is defined as a violation of the rules, then we’d want to know whether those rules are reasonable, who devised them, and who stands to benefit by them. Yet these questions are rarely asked.

Some kinds of cheating involve actions that are indisputably objectionable. Plagiarism is one

example. While it's not always clear in practice where to draw the line between an idea that has been influenced by the work of other writers and one that clearly originated with someone else (and ought to be identified as such),[23] we should be able to agree that it's wrong to use a specific concept or a verbatim passage from another source without giving credit if the objective is to deceive the reader about its origin.[24] More interesting, though, and perhaps just as common, are those cases where what is regarded as cheating actually consists of a failure to abide by restrictions that may be arbitrary and difficult to defend. It's not just that questionable educational practices may cause students to cheat, in other words; it's that such practices are responsible for defining certain behaviors as cheating. In the absence of those practices and the ideology supporting them, such behaviors would not be regarded as illegitimate.

This unsettling possibility enjoys a *prima facie* plausibility because there are plenty of other things we regard as facts of life whose existence actually turns out to be dependent on social context. Sportsmanship, for example, is an artificial concept that wouldn't exist at all except for competition:

Only in activities where people are attempting to defeat one another is it meaningful to talk about doing so in a graceful or virtuous fashion. (People who play cooperative games don't require reminders to be "good sports" because they're working with one another toward a common goal.) Likewise, theft does not exist in cultures where there is no private property - not because people refrain from stealing but because the idea literally has no meaning if people's possessions are not off-limit to one another. There is no such thing as leisure unless work is experienced as alienating or unfulfilling. You cannot commit blasphemy unless you believe there is a God to be profaned. And jaywalking is a meaningless concept in Boston, where I live, because there is simply no expectation that pedestrians should cross only at intersections.

On what, then, does the concept of cheating depend for its existence? One answer was supplied by a scandal at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the early 1990s. More than seventy students were punished for "cheating" because they worked in small groups to write computer programs for fear that they would otherwise be unable to keep up with their class assignments. "Many feel that the required work is clearly impossible to do by straightforward" — that is, solitary — "means," observed the faculty member who chaired MIT's Committee on Discipline.[25] The broader context in which to understand this episode is that cooperative learning, beyond helping students deal with an overwhelming workload, also provides a number of benefits when compared with individual or competitive instructional models. By working together, students not only are able to exchange information and divide up tasks but typically end up engaging in more sophisticated problem-solving strategies, which, in turn, results in more impressive learning on a range of measures. Structured cooperation in the classroom also proves beneficial in terms of self-esteem, relationships, and motivation to learn.[26]

The problem, however, is that, aside from the occasional sanctioned group project, the default condition in most American classrooms - particularly where homework and testing are concerned - is reflected in that familiar injunction heard from elementary school teachers: "I want to see what you can do, not what your neighbor can do." (Or, if the implications were spelled out more precisely, "I want to see what you can do all by yourself, deprived of the resources and social support that characterize most well-functioning real-world environments, rather than seeing how much more you and your neighbors could accomplish together.") Whether, and under what circumstances, it might make more sense to have students learn, and to assess their performance, in groups is an issue ripe for analysis and disagreement. Alas, most collaboration is simply classified as cheating. End of discussion.

By the same token, students may be disciplined if they consult reference sources during any sort of assessment in which the teacher has forbidden this. But what does it say about the instructor, and

the education system, that assessment is geared largely to students' ability to memorize? What pedagogical purpose is served by declaring that students will be judged on this capacity and must therefore spend a disproportionate amount of time attempting to cram dates, definitions, and other facts into their short-term memories? How else might we have encouraged them to spend that time? And what is the purpose of this sort of assessment? Is information being collected about students' capacity to remember what they've read or heard for the purpose of helping them to learn more effectively — or is the exercise more about sorting them (comparing students to one another) or controlling them (by using assessment to elicit compliance)?

It may well be that students who use "unauthorized" materials or assistance thereby compromise the teacher's preferred method of assessment. But perhaps this should lead us to question the legitimacy of that plan and ask why those materials have been excluded. Similarly, if "cheating hinders standardization," as one group of academics warned,[27] should we condemn the cheaters or question the value of a standardized education? Again, we can expect lively debate on these questions; but again, what is troubling is the absence of such debate — the result of uncritically accepting conventional definitions and assumptions. Consulting a reference source during an exam (or working with one's peers on an assignment) will be classified as cheating in one classroom, with all the grave implications and practical repercussions attendant on that label, while it will be seen as appropriate, even admirable, in another. Students unlucky enough to find themselves in the first classroom stand condemned of cheating, with little attention paid to the nature of the rules they broke. To that extent, their actions have violated a purely conventional set of prohibitions but they are treated as though guilty of a moral infraction.

Moreover, any student who offered just such a defense, perhaps arguing that her action was actually less problematic than the instructor's requirements, or that what she did was more analogous to entering a lecture hall through a door marked "exit" than to lying or stealing, would likely be accused of engaging in denial, attempting to displace responsibility for what she has done, or trying to rationalize her behavior. Once we've decided that someone's action is morally wrong, her efforts to challenge that premise, no matter how well-reasoned, merely serve to confirm our view of her immorality.

In 2006, a front-page story in the New York Times described how instructors and administrators are struggling to catch college students who use ingenious high-tech methods of cheating. In every example cited in the article, the students were figuring out ways to consult their notes during exams; in one case, a student was caught using a computer spell-check program. The implication here, which is that students even at the university level are being tested primarily on their capacity to memorize, was noted neither by the reporter nor by any of his sources. Only a single sentence dealt with the nature of the assessments: "Several professors said they tried to write exams on which it was hard to cheat, posing questions that outside resources would not help answer." [28] Even here, the intent appeared to be foiling cheaters rather than improving the quality of assessment and instruction. Or, to put it differently, the goal was to find ways to prevent students from being able to cheat rather than addressing the reasons they wanted to cheat — or what the instructors regarded as cheating (and why).

These distinctions are important. An Alabama student, quoted in another article, pointed out that "you can cheat if all you are going to be tested on are facts, but it is much harder to cheat when you are asked to . . . write an essay." However, this student went on to make a much more significant point: "Maybe a bigger problem is that teachers require students to memorize instead of teaching them how to think." [29] The deficiencies of the curriculum, in other words, go well beyond whether they facilitate or discourage cheating.

Dudley Barlow, a retired high school teacher and education columnist, recalled assigning a research

paper about El Salvador. One student began with some facts about the country

and then went on to describe how General William Booth and his band of followers worked diligently to help the downtrodden by spreading the gospel of Christ. I was absolutely stumped about the paper until I realized the student had sat in a library copying from an encyclopedia about El Salvador, and he had inadvertently turned two pages at one time. Without even realizing it, he began copying text about the Salvation Army.

This story presents us with a kind of projective test, notable for what our reactions to it reveal about us. It's not just that some will be appalled and others will find it funny; it's that some will regard it as a reflection on the student while others will zero in on what the teacher had assigned the student (and his classmates) to do. Fortunately, Barlow himself had the courage to adopt the latter point of view. "That student," he concluded, "finally convinced me that the kinds of research papers I had customarily assigned were not accomplishing what I had in mind." [30] What he had in mind, presumably, was helping students to learn as well as to take pleasure in doing so. And detecting or deterring cheating more effectively, as one language arts teacher explains, fails to address the "educational damage" caused by whatever systemic forces have taught students that "the final product takes precedence over learning." [31]

Thus, suppose that cheating could be at least partly curtailed by tightly monitoring and regulating students or by repeatedly announcing the dire penalties that await anyone who breaks the rules. Would this result be worth the cost of creating a climate of mistrust, undermining a sense of community, and perhaps leading students to become less enthusiastic about learning? Rebecca Moore Howard, who teaches writing at Syracuse University, put it this way: "In our stampede to fight what some call a 'plague' of plagiarism, we risk becoming the enemies rather than the mentors of our students; we are replacing the student-teacher relationship with the criminal-police relationship. . . . Worst of all, we risk not recognizing that our own pedagogy needs reform. . . [if it] encourages plagiarism because it discourages learning." [32]

It is sometimes said that students who take forbidden shortcuts with their homework will just end up "cheating themselves" because they will not derive any intellectual benefits from doing the assignment. This assertion, too, is often accepted on faith rather than prompting us to ask just how likely it is that the assignment really would prove valuable if it had been completed in accordance with instructions. A review of the available evidence on the effects of homework fails to support widely held beliefs about its benefits. [33] To that extent, we're forced to confront the possibility that students' violation of the instructor's rules not only may fail to constitute a moral infraction but also may not lead to any diminution of learning. Outraged condemnations of cheating, at least in such instances, may turn out to have more to do with power than with either ethics or pedagogy. Perhaps what actually elicits that outrage is not a lack of integrity on the part of students so much as a lack of conformity. [34]

A penetrating analysis of cheating will at least raise these possibilities even if it may not always lead to these conclusions. It will invite us to re-examine what comes to be called cheating and to understand the concept as a function of the context in which the label is used. Even if the reality of cheating is unquestioned, however, its causes will lead us to look at the actions of teachers as well as the (re)actions of students, and at classroom and cultural structures as well as individual behaviors. Such a perspective reminds us that how we educate students is the dog; cheating is just the tail.

## NOTES

1. Lee Ross, "The Intuitive Psychologist and His Shortcomings: Distortions in the Attribution

- Process," *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 10, edited by Leonard Berkowitz. New York: Academic Press, 1977, p. 183.
2. Philip Zimbardo quoted in Claudia Dreifus, "Finding Hope in Knowing the Universal Capacity for Evil," *New York Times*, April 3, 2007: D2.
  3. Marlowe teaches at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island. Personal communication, August 2006.
  4. *Character Education Inquiry, Studies in the Nature of Character*. Volume 1: *Studies in Deceit* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), Book 1, pp. 381, 400.
  5. See the research conducted with undergraduates and high school students by Gregory Schraw, Lori Olafson, Fred Kuch, Trish Lehman, Stephen Lehman, and Matthew T. McCrudden, "Interest and Academic Cheating," in *Psychology of Academic Cheating*, edited by Eric M. Anderman and Tamera B. Murdock (Burlington, MA: Elsevier Academic Press, 2007).
  6. Tamera B. Murdock, Angela Miller, and Julie Kohlhardt, "Effects of Classroom Context Variables on High School Students' Judgments of the Acceptability and Likelihood of Cheating," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 96 (2004): 775. Also see the research reviewed by Schraw et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 60-65.
  7. This finding by Kay Johnston at Colgate University was described in Lynley H. Anderman, Tierra M. Freeman, and Christian E. Mueller, "The 'Social' Side of Social Context: Interpersonal and Affiliative Dimensions of Students' Experiences and Academic Dishonesty," in Anderman and Murdock, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 207.
  8. *Character Education Inquiry, op. cit.*, Book 2, p. 184.
  9. This paraphrase of a conclusion by Rutgers professor Donald McCabe and his colleagues in an article called "Cheating in Academic Institutions: A Decade of Research," is offered by Eric M. Anderman, "The Effects of Personal, Classroom, and School Goal Structures on Academic Cheating," in Anderman and Murdock, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 95.
  10. Schraw et al., *op. cit.*, p. 69.
  11. Jason M. Stephens and Hunter Gehlbach, "Under Pressure and Underengaged: Motivational Profiles and Academic Cheating in High School," in Anderman and Murdock, eds., *op. cit.* Quotation appears on p. 127. Also see the review of other research in Eric M. Anderman, *op. cit.*
  12. For more on the research behind this distinction, and the detrimental effects of overemphasizing academic performance, see Alfie Kohn, [The Schools Our Children Deserve](#) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), chapter 2.
  13. Eric M. Anderman, Tripp Griesinger, and Gloria Westerfield, "Motivation and Cheating During Early Adolescence," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 90 (1998): 84-93; and Eric M. Anderman and Carol Midgley, "Changes in Self-Reported Academic Cheating Across the Transition from Middle School to High School," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 29 (2004): 499-517.
  14. On this point, see E.M. Anderman, *op. cit.*, p. 93.



15. For example, see Anderman et al. 1998; and Angela D. Miller, Tamera B. Murdock, Eric M. Anderman, and Amy L. Poindexter, "Who Are All These Cheaters?: Characteristics of Academically Dishonest Students," in Anderman and Murdock, eds., op. cit., p. 20.
16. Alfie Kohn, [Punished by Rewards](#), rev. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).
17. This is also true of international rankings of student performance. Even putting aside the question of whether standardized tests should be accepted as valid indicators, when competence in math or literacy is framed in competitive terms, the goal is for American students to triumph over their peers. The accomplishments of children who happen to live in other lands are therefore viewed as troubling; we are encouraged to want those children to fail, at least in relative terms. For this reason alone, educational "competitiveness" is a deeply flawed goal. See Kohn, ["Against Competitiveness,"](#) Education Week, September 19, 2007: 32, 26.
18. Alfie Kohn, [No Contest: The Case Against Competition](#), rev. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992).
19. Martin Covington, *Making the Grade: A Self-Worth Perspective on Motivation and School Reform*(Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 91.
20. See Susan Gilbert, "Scientists Explore the Molding of Children's Morals," New York Times, March 18, 2003, p. D5.
21. For an excellent review of the prevalence of, reasons for, and moral ambiguity surrounding cheating by educators in the context of high-stakes testing, see Sharon L. Nichols and David C. Berliner, *Collateral Damage: How High-Stakes Testing Corrupts America's Schools* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2007), esp. chapter 2. Also see Thomas M. Haladyna, Susan Bobbit Nolen, and Nancy S. Haas, "Raising Standardized Achievement Test Scores and the Origins of Test Pollution," *Educational Researcher* 20, 5 (June-July 1991), pp. 2-7; and Claudia Kolker, "Texas Offers Hard Lessons on School Accountability," Los Angeles Times, April 14, 1999.
22. David F. Labaree, *How to Succeed in School Without Really Learning: The Credentials Race in American Education* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 258, 32, 259.
23. "Encouraged by digital dualisms, we forget that plagiarism means many different things: downloading a term paper, failing to give proper credit to the source of an idea, copying extensive passages without attribution, inserting someone else's phrases or sentences - perhaps with small changes - into your own prose, and forgetting to supply a set of quotation marks. If we ignore these distinctions, we fail to see that most of us have violated the plagiarism injunctions in one way or another, large or small, intentionally or inadvertently, at one time or another. The distinctions are just not that crisp" (Rebecca Moore Howard, "Forget About Policing Plagiarism. Just teach," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 16, 2001, p. B24).
24. The intent to deceive is critical because plagiarism is sometimes unconscious. It's not uncommon for people to borrow someone else's work while genuinely believing it's their own. In fact, this happens often enough that it's been given a name ("cryptomnesia") and become a subject for social psychological research. See, for example, Alan S. Brown and Dana R. Murphy, "Cryptomnesia: Delineating Inadvertent Plagiarism," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, vol. 15 (1989): 432-42; and Jesse Preston and Daniel M. Wegner, "The Eureka Error: Inadvertent Plagiarism by Misattributions of Effort," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 92 (2007): 575-84.

25. Quoted in Fox Butterfield, "Scandal over Cheating at M.I.T. Stirs Debate on Limits of Teamwork," *New York Times*, May 22, 1991, p. A23.
26. For example, see the research reviewed in David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson, *Cooperation and Competition: Theory and Research* (Edina, MN: Interaction Books, 1989); and in Kohn, 1992, *op. cit.* For a recent meta-analysis of the effects of cooperative learning and peer tutoring in elementary school, see Marika D. Ginsburg-Block, Cynthia A. Rohrbeck, and John W. Fantuzzo, "A Meta-Analytic Review of Social, Self-Concept, and Behavioral Outcomes of Peer-Assisted Learning," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. 98 (2006): 732-49.
27. Linda Garavalia, Elizabeth Olson, Emily Russell, and Leslie Christensen, "How Do Students Cheat?" in Anderman and Murdock, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 35.
28. Jonathan D. Glater, "Colleges Chase as Cheats Shift to Higher Tech," *New York Times*, May 18, 2006, pp. A1, A24.
29. This student is quoted in Paris S. Strom and Robert D. Strom, "Cheating in Middle School and High School," *Educational Forum*, Winter 2007, p. 112.
30. Dudley Barlow, "Cut, Paste, and Get Caught: Plagiarism and the Internet," *Education Digest*, May 2006, p. 40.
31. Lisa Renard, "Cut and Paste 101: Plagiarism and the Net," *Educational Leadership*, December 1999/January 2000, p. 41.
32. Howard, *op. cit.*.
33. Alfie Kohn, [The Homework Myth: Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing](#) (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2006).
34. The same motive appears to be on display when students who clearly have mastered the material in a course are nevertheless given a lower grade because they failed to complete all the homework. Here the student has implicitly disconfirmed the hypothesis that homework is necessary for successful learning, and the teacher responds by saying, in effect, that the point isn't to learn so much as it is to do what one is told.

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