Parallel universes: cheating at the university.
Comparing lecturers’ and students’ understanding of student cheating.

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Aims of the paper

• provide a detailed account of the main causes and effects of cheating in the social scientific discourse
  • data: studies dealing with the causal factors of cheating published between 1990 and 2016 (JSTOR & EBSCO).

• compare these features of the relevant literature with so-called 'practice'
  • data: 15 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholder groups in higher education (students/lecturers)
I just ended a 5 year relationship

Omg are you ok?

Yeah I'm fine, it wasn't my relationship

https://www.facebook.com/classicalartmemes/
Understanding attributions

ATRIBUTION
What causes certain behaviour?

It is something within the person we observe, i.e. their personality

= internal attribution

We make a
DISPOSITIONAL ATTRIBUTION

Is it caused by something outside the person we observe, i.e. their situation

= external attribution

We make a
SITUATIONAL ATTRIBUTION

**Literature review: lessons**

- individual characteristics
  - research cannot conclusively determine their role
  - personal attributes (self-efficacy and motivation) do matter
- situational factors
  - seem to be highly relevant (deadlines, the perception of peers and institutional norms)
- cultural norms and belief systems
  - provide frames for giving interpretations to cheating
Causal maps
External effects

- Massification of higher education
  - Strength of external pressures for the continuation of studies
  - Degree of cheating's social acceptance
  - Strength of the student-as-consumer mindset
  - Amount of students' time dedicated to work
  - Degree of level of solidarities among students
“There are too many students here who are not interested in what they are studying. They are studying because their parents asked them to do [it], and so they don’t feel motivated to learn. They do not feel that they need what they learn here later because they do not want to work in this field” (Lecturer5, woman).

“...I really don’t want to generalise here, because this is not true for all of them, but with many of the regular [i.e. ‘daytime’, as opposed to distance learning] students I see that this is just how it goes. So they finished high school and then either because this is what they saw at home or because this is what the parents expect or anything, they have to come and graduate in this school [i.e. the university]” (Lecturer8, woman).
Assessment & teaching practices

- Number of people taking the exam
- Number of people participating in the course
- Proportion of multiple-choice questions in the assessment system
- Proportion of oral exams in the assessment system
- Proportion of essays (home assignments) in the assessment system
- Level of focus on practical problems in the assessment system
- Proportion of essays (during written exams) in the assessment system
- Degree of focus on practical problems in teaching
- Ability to educate capital students
- Level of fairness in assessment (perceived by students)
- Difficulty of passing the subject
- Proportion of theory/practice in the course material
- Level of cheating perceived by lecturers
degree of students' self-efficacy (related to learning)

level of students' commitment towards gaining knowledge

degree of usefulness of course material (as perceived by the students)

students' familiarity with institutional/learning environment

level of students' intrinsic motivation

ability of education to captivate students

amount of students' time dedicated to learning

level of fairness in assessment (perceived by students)

Personal & group characteristics of students
“I find [cheating] outrageous at an emotional level that is for sure. The emotional involvement is more intense in this case. And it is also a bit of a disappointment that (...) the student did not understand why it would be better for her/him if s/he didn’t do it that way and would invest some energy instead. Evidently, I also prepare for my classes and I would like to see the result of my investment in that I see that the student prepares and understands [the material], and not that s/he attempts to gain advantage by cheating” (Lecturer2, woman).
External effects

- Strength of external pressures for the continuation of studies
  - Degree of cheating's social acceptance
  - Length of intervals between each exam
  - Number of exams (during one exam period)
  - Amount of students' time dedicated to work
  - Proportion of multiple-choice questions in the assessment system
motivation level of lecturers

level of workload on lecturers

age of lecturer

perceived level of lecturers' control (as seen by students)

harshness of sanctions

degree of usefulness of the course material (as perceived by the students)

perceived frequency of cheating
Personal & group characteristics of students

age of student

strength of individual dispositions towards cheating

degree of financial gains depending on student performance

degree of students' self-efficacy (related to learning)

student's performance

level of learning

+ + +

+ + +

+ + +
**Comparison of the maps**

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<th>LECTURERS</th>
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<th>STUDENTS</th>
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Points to consider

• Emotional toll of cheating
  - disappointment of teachers
  - students also report feelings of guilt
• Organisational culture: hierarchical culture type
  - the need for tight control (absence perceived as weakness)
  - uncertainty avoidance (cheating when facing seemingly insurmountable odds of failure)
• Social acceptance of cheating
  - breaking rules in order to thrive
  - taking responsibility for one's actions vs being 'victims of circumstances'
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