

# ARE HONOR CODES THE EXAMPLE OF 'AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM'? THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE US AND EUROPEAN HONOR CODES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Preventing academic dishonesty has become one of the central concerns of the modern higher education (Pekovic et al., 2020). Accordingly, higher education actors from all around the world have joined the 'academic integrity movement' (Gallant and Drinan, 2006). Consequently, higher education institutions (HEIs) have implemented similar mechanisms and policies (e.g. honor codes, disciplinary measures, academic integrity tutorials, text-matching software, etc.) in order to attain the same goal – combat the academic dishonesty.

Previous literature has paid special attention to honor codes since they are assessed as a very useful tool for preventing academic dishonesty (May and Lloyd, 1993; McCabe and Trevino, 1993; 1996; Schwartz et al., 2013; Ely et al., 2013; Tatum and Schwartz, 2017). The first academic honor code in the US originated in the early 19th century (Beasley, 1987; DiMatteo and Wiesner, 1994). The code also found its place in Europe, where a large number of HEIs codify ethical standards of behavior and define principles of ethical misconduct (Anohina-Naumeca et al., 2011; Tauginienė, 2016; Foltýnek et al., 2018). Therefore, honor codes have become an essential part of the global academic setting.

The principles of academic integrity in the US and Europe are similar since they are based on the same values (Tauginienė et al., 2019). However, as indicated by Fishman (2016), the US approaches to academic integrity differ considerably from the European ones mainly because the US education system is based on equality, opportunity, and liberty. For instance, the author explains that the US universities strived to assure access to students from

wide range of backgrounds while at the same time want to maintain high ethical standards in order to preserve their reputation, relevance, and survival. Also, the difference between the academic integrity approach in the US and Europe is identified in Grimes (2004)'s analysis which demonstrated that the US students apply a higher standard of honesty in their behavior compared to the European students (i.e. Albania, Belarus, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Russia). In the same vein, Lupton et al. (2000) provide evidence that the Central European students have different attitudes, beliefs, and definitions of cheating compared to their US counterparts. Comparing the US and Western German students, Evans et al. (1993) report that Western German students recognize fewer types of behaviors as cheating than the US students. Accordingly, it could be expected that procedures for identifying honor code violations and punishing offenders may also vary between the two cultures. Moreover, the US education system is more reliant on honor codes than other countries (Iovacchini et al., 1989; Park, 2003). Accordingly, Clarke and Aiello (2007) confirm that UK students perceive honor codes 'too American'. This has led us to wonder whether, after all, the use of honor codes could be understood as an example of 'American exceptionalism'. Shafer (1999, pp. 446) explains that 'American exceptionalism is thus the notion that the United States was born in, and continues to embody, qualitative differences from other nations'.

Given the importance of honor codes for promoting academic integrity, the purpose of this study is to investigate the differences between honor codes in the US and European HEIs. Particularly, we will

examine whether non-toleration clauses (obligation of students to report an incident of cheating) are present or not in the European honor codes by analyzing more than 50 honor codes implemented in leading European universities. Previous scholars did not analyze the context of honor codes in the European HEIs, but it is well-recognized that the US universities underline individual responsibility in their honor codes (Fishman, 2016). In other words, the US HEIs rely on students to hold each other responsible for academic misconduct and to create a strong academic integrity system (Roberts-Cady, 2008). Therefore, the first step in establishing such a system is peer reporting and, consequently, changing attitudes to peer reporting (Rettinger and Searcy, 2012). In the US context, peer reporting was an essential part of the honor code setting for a long time (Beasley, 1987) and despite various changes of the educational system throughout the years, it remained present in the code. What more, non-toleration clause is still part of the honor code system in almost 50% of the US top hundred law schools (Manuel, 2020).

Furthermore, it is not clear whether students' engagement in academic integrity, as a significant factor for creating a culture that fosters academic honesty (McCabe et al., 2001; Aaron and Roche, 2013), exists in the European honor codes. Some of the research findings confirm that there is a negative attitude to the implementation of non-toleration clause in the UK (Yakovchuk et al., 2011). Therefore, considering that 'traditional' honor codes based on unproctored exams, honesty pledges, and student-

run judicial processes help the US HEIs in deterring academic dishonesty (McCabe et al., 2002; Schwartz et al., 2013; Ely et al., 2013; Tatum and Schwartz, 2017), if not implemented, the European HEIs should reconsider their honor codes to additionally focus its basis on the students' engagement. This is further supported by the findings provided by Dix et al. (2014) who demonstrate that increasing students' engagement in the honor code could reduce student cheating. Consequently, reinforcing the honor code is significant for creating an environment that supports academic honesty (Pauli et al., 2014). Overall, providing the evidence that the European honor codes do not dispose of non-toleration clause, we may argue that the US honor codes could be considered as an example of their 'exceptionalism'. In order to do so, we will select the first 50 US and European universities based on the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) system and the system run by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University's Institute of Higher Education considered as two best-known international ranking systems (Taylor and Braddock, 2007). Furthermore, we will investigate honor codes of the selected universities in order to identify the main differences between honor codes in the US and European universities. In particular, we will focus on the non-toleration clause of the honor codes to verify whether the non-toleration clause is important feature characterizing mainly honor codes in the US HEIs. Accordingly, the analysis will shed light on whether the honor code in the US could be considered as the indicator of 'American Exceptionalism'.

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