‘Cheating’ or ‘Sharing’?
Academic Ethics Across Cultures

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“Academic integrity is a fundamental value of teaching, learning and scholarship. Yet, there is growing evidence that students cheat and plagiarize.”
Research from the Center for Academic Integrity
Clemson University Rutland Institute for Ethics

• On most US college campuses, over 75% of students admit to some cheating.
• Internet plagiarism: 10% in 1999, 41% in 2001.
• Majority of students (68%): “not a serious issue.”
• Cheating: from 11% in 1963 to 49% in 1993 (self-reported -- state universities)
• US high schools: 74% - serious test cheating
• 72% - serious cheating on written assignments
• Over half - some level of plagiarism on written assignments using the Internet.
Common Examples of Academic Dishonesty

- Copying answers from another
- Unapproved collaboration
- Using notes or assistance of some sort during exams
- Submitting one’s own work for multiple assignments
- Claiming another’s work as one’s own
Plagiarism as a Cultural Construct

Oxford English Dictionary definition of plagiarism:
“to take and use another person’s ideas as one’s own.”

Question: Is plagiarism always synonymous with cheating?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Practices</th>
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<tr>
<td>Russia &amp; Eastern Europe</td>
<td>• Sharing notes, talking in class OK – not hidden</td>
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<td>• Goal is to bring the whole class level up</td>
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<td>• Bribes routinely expected for grades</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
<td>• Sharing of answers common, but understood as student vs. teacher; not sharing is social taboo</td>
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<td>Mexico</td>
<td>• Sharing is common, but students will deny</td>
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<td>• Professors do not expect citations in paper</td>
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<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>• Teamwork the rule in personal and academic life, including supporting those who do not contribute to the group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Characteristics</td>
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<td>China</td>
<td>• Students openly admit cheating is a way of life</td>
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<td>• ‘Intellectual property’ a foreign concept</td>
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<td>• Value: saving face, maintaining group harmony</td>
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<td>• Cheating seen as a skill everyone should develop to succeed in the world; the world is corrupt</td>
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<td>Burma</td>
<td>• Student learning seen as a task shared by group</td>
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<td>• Worst accusation in culture is selfishness: pursuing own goals at expense of others</td>
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<td>India &amp; Bangladesh</td>
<td>• Student riots when test cheating prevented</td>
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<td>• Exams should not be memory tests</td>
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<td>Greece</td>
<td>• Focus on learning concepts, rather than words</td>
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<td>• Connecting quotes demonstrates understanding</td>
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‘Plagiarism’ & ‘Cheating’ in Cross-Cultural Perspective

Non-Western countries:
• Focus on textbook learning
• Rote learning
• Using another author’s words is a form of respect
• Loved poetry and revered scholarly arguments are learned by heart
• Students have difficulty stating own opinion
• Students have difficulty criticizing others’ words
Inherent Problems in U.S.

• Academic dishonesty is defined differently across campuses, disciplines and departments

• Students are educated about academic dishonesty in different ways

• Academic honesty violations vary and are inconsistent

• All of this is intensified for the visiting student
How is the problem approached now?

- Honor codes
- Syllabus statements
- Basic message:
  “Plagiarism and cheating are not allowed and consequences are serious.”
- Detection
- Penalization
Detection Programs

- Proving plagiarism can be burdensome on faculty
- Results are mixed and do not indicate unintentional plagiarism
- Devices derive from Western mindset*
  - emphasis on “catching” rather supporting new members of the community
  - Non-natives become disproportionately identified and scrutinized

* Niall Hayes and Lucas Introna, Lancaster University Management School
Language Acquisition Issues

• “Patch writing” as a transition to language independence

• Students are taught to mimic academics to improve writing skills

• Feeling that student cannot improve upon what has already been written
Group Work
A Model for Cross-Cultural Training

1. Acknowledge that plagiarism and cheating are not universal concepts
   • share experiences
   • provide examples of expectations
   • academic ethics as cultural construct
A Model for Cross-Cultural Training

2. Identify sources of difficulty
   • “common knowledge”
   • collaborative work vs. cheating
   • group vs. individualist focus of society
   • teacher-centered vs. learner-centered
   • collaboration vs. competition model
   • reporting on others: honor or betrayal?
   • research & citation conventions
   • recognizing own writing style
   • student–teacher access
   • pressures on international students
   • ownership of intellectual property
   • differing classroom cultures
   • technology dependence of US students
3. Acknowledge contradictions of US academic expectations
   • Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) handout: “Avoiding Plagiarism”
   • role of syllabus, US & abroad
   • how to seek help with clarification of expectations, or with citation
4. Provide specific training on citation
   • standards of different disciplines
   • ungraded practice papers
   • paraphrasing instruction and practice
   • collaborate with campus writing center?
   • differing writing and style guides in use
   • alert US students to possible differences in expectations abroad
   • utilization of tutors
A Model for Cross-Cultural Training

5. Encourage students to learn expectations of host culture
   - Be prepared
   - If expectations clash with home culture norms, look for the value in them
   - Make decisions about any values that cannot be accepted
   - Know resources for resolution
U.S. Students Abroad

• Concerns are similar

• See “Tips for U.S. Study Abroad Students: Preparing for Academic Ethics Across Cultures” sheet
Resources on Academic Integrity

- University of Sydney, Faculty of Economics and Business: [www.econ.usyd.edu.au/](http://www.econ.usyd.edu.au/)
- Extensive web resources
- University sites: guidelines for students, honor codes, suggestions for faculty
- Interactive on-line quizzes
- TESL-EJ articles [http://tesl-ej.org/about.html](http://tesl-ej.org/about.html)
- NAFSA: [US Classroom Culture](http://tesl-ej.org/about.html) booklet
- Institute for Study Abroad, Butler University: Academic Differences section [www.ifsa-butler.org](http://www.ifsa-butler.org)
- Center for Academic Integrity, Clemson University Rutland Institute for Ethics
Questions for Further Consideration

• Have we educated ourselves about the current state of academic misconduct in our program locations?

• Who has the power to handle cases of academic misconduct in the host country and are we prepared to accept their decisions?

• Should our students be held to the standards of the host country, whether they be more stringent or more lenient?
Contact Us

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Thank you