

Chapter 26

Understanding Plagiarism Behavior through Criterion Studies: Predictors of Actual Plagiarism

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ABSTRACT

Plagiarism is increasingly evident in business and academia. While links between demographic, personality, and situational factors have been found, previous research has not used actual plagiarism behavior as a criterion variable. Previous research on academic dishonesty has consistently used to self-report measures to establish prevalence of dishonest behavior. In this chapter the author covers the results of four studies that used plagiarism behavior to establish its prevalence, as well as relationships between plagiarism behavior and: 1. Integrity-related personal selection measures 2. Workplace deviance 3. Ethnicity 4. Acculturation 5. Individualism 6. Collectivism 7. Religiosity 8. Spirituality.

These studies cover new ground in two respects: 1) That the academic dishonesty literature is subject to revision using criterion variables to avoid self bias and social desirability issues, 2) This research establishes the relationship between actual academic dishonesty and the aforementioned variables.

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UNDERSTANDING PLAGIARISM BEHAVIOR THROUGH CRITERION STUDIES: PREDICTORS OF ACTUAL PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism continues to be a problem in the business academia and professional environments graduates inhabit. The current chapter contributes to the literature on unethical conduct in the following ways. First, all of the studies presented use a strong criterion variable to objectively assess plagiarism and reduce the self-report and social desirability biases of previous research on the topic. Second, we link plagiarism to a wide range of related individual differences that have been proposed as being linked to plagiarism or impact likelihood of plagiarism. Accordingly we will introduce plagiarism, describe our criterion variable, and then present the results of a stream of research regarding plagiarism and: integrity and workplace deviance, ethnicity and acculturation, individualism and collectivism, and religiosity and spirituality.

Cheating Behavior and Criterion Studies

Research suggests that while students understand that cheating is unethical and are exposed to the consequences of cheating in their academic careers; most acknowledge cheating at some point while in school (Davis, Grover, Becker, & McGregor, 1992). Researchers have also consistently found significant differences between business students and non-business students (with business students being more prone to cheat) in the degree of (self-reported) academic cheating (McCabe and Trevino, 1995) and tolerance of cheating behaviors (Roig and Ballew, 1994). While an array of demographics and situational factors have been examined in relationship to student cheating (Crown and Spiller, 1998), the majority of studies have used self-reported measures of cheating. This

limits the viability of data due to social desirability and self-report biases (Lawson, 2004).

STUDY ONE: INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND PLAGIARISM BEHAVIOR

While there is a large body of research on individual differences and academic dishonesty (Whitley, 1998; Crown and Spiller, 1998), there is a paucity of business ethics research examining individual difference (specifically personality) variables in specific relationship to plagiarism. Some of the variables that have been explored in relationship to cheating behavior are locus of control (Forsyth, Pope, and McMillan, 1985), neuroticism and extraversion (Bushway and Nash, 1977), and personality type (Coleman and McHaffey, 2000). In a comprehensive examination of cheating in college students, Whitley (1998) summarizes studies the wide range of individual differences variables used to predict self-report cheating behaviors. Some important variables from the Whitley summary are self-reported honesty, moral development, superego strength, industriousness, Type A behavior, deviant behavior, impulse control, self-esteem, Machiavellianism, and belief in a just world. Importantly, while attitudes toward cheating can predict cheating behavior, attitudes are self reported, and are less compelling than the actual behavior in research. Surprisingly, only one study addressed the relationship between academic dishonesty and integrity (Lucas and Friedrich, 2005), with none addressing academic plagiarism and measures of integrity.

While Lucas and Friedrich link integrity measures to academic dishonesty while controlling for social desirability, the research (as all of the above studies) relies on self reported behaviors such as taking tests for others and copying test answers. Again, prior studies have predominantly focused on academic cheating; our goal was to clearly establish the relationship between indi-

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