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**Abstract**

Video and online gaming have become major pastimes for many undergraduates, with cheating as an acceptable practice. However, when students perceive their educational experience as a game and similarly accept cheating as an element of the schema, using business simulation games and gaming terminology in the classroom may have profound implications that extend beyond the classroom into professional careers. This work explores the connection between gaming and cheating, and finds that a significant correlation exists.

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Business education is about preparing captains of industry. To accomplish this, business academe strives to maintain a close relationship with industry. Yet, recent discoveries of ethical debacles within companies like Enron, WorldCom, and Tyco, have pressed us to consider whether we, as business faculty, in some way, have contributed to, or participated in creating black-hat captains of industry. Most business schools teach ethics courses or weave discussions of ethical dilemmas into core courses. Apparently, teaching ethics courses is not enough.

Popular books have described activity in industry as a competitive “game.” They point to gaming terminology which permeates the business environment as evidence: establishing a mission, developing strategies, engaging tactics, working the deal, positioning, manoeuvring, competitive edge, etc. (Venneri, 2005) For many, the adrenaline rush of the competitive nature of business is what drew them to this profession in the first place. Most business and management faculty members have either considerable industry experience or have served as consultants after entering academia. Therefore, vocabulary and methods that business and management scholars use mirrors industry and gaming.

Gaming has grown exponentially in the United States. This generation of business students, like no others, has access to gaming on levels previously unheard of through the use of video games and Internet gaming sites. (Association, 2005) cited recent surveys that indicate that 75 percent of American heads of households play video games. Of those, 44 percent are female and 56 percent are male. The average number of years adult gamers have been playing games is 12 years. Of particular note, with regard to this research, is the accepted use of “cheats.” These are online websites where cheating strategies are published so that game players will be more able to navigate effectively the gaming environment of their favourite video game (www.cheatcc.com). Users of these sites are often encouraged to post any new cheating strategies that they discover. Disturbingly, students have also remarked that they see education as “a game.” Is it possible that students are taking accepted behaviours in video gaming into other forms of perceived games such as getting a college degree, getting a job, getting a promotion, etc.? If so, where will it stop, when they have reached the coveted role of the CEO?

Academic cheating can be defined as the use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information, or aids in an academic setting. There is a large amount of literature relating to academic cheating or dishonesty. (Whitley, 1998) reviewed 107 studies on the topic of cheating among college students published between 1970 and 1996. He discovered cheating was on the increase in the 60s and 70s. Some of the strongest correlates of cheating were related to “expectations of success, having cheated in the past, studying under poor conditions, holding positive attitudes toward cheating, perceiving that social norms support cheating, and anticipating a large reward for success” (p. 235). (Niels, 1997) moreover, cited a comprehensive study of Who's Who High School Students in 1993. He found that close to 80% confessed to some form of academic cheating. In (D. & Drinan, 1999) noted that 75 percent of students cheated.

The focus of academe for students has changed. (McCabe, 1996) reported that students in college have, over the years, changed their focus from getting an education to getting a degree. He estimates that 85 percent want a “degree” and want to do the minimal amount of work to achieve it. A degree is the necessary requirement for entering the job market or attaining further degrees.

Competitive pressures are now the norm in academe. (McCabe, et al., 1999) stated that pressure to compete for the top job and academic slots can funnel to academic dishonesty. Moreover, research also demonstrates that cheating is often overlooked or treated lightly by faculty (McCabe, 1996). Students who normally would not cheat observe the lack of consequences, view their honesty as a disadvantage, and also begin to cheat to “level the playing field.” This competitiveness within academe, (Perry, et al., 1990) suggest, is a catalyst for cheating. They went on to say that competitive type A-scoring students were more likely to cheat than non-competitive type B-scoring students. In their qualitative work, (Payne & Nantz, 1994) looked for cheating metaphors that brought forward this competitive perspective. These metaphors include seeing “cheating as a type of game,” “winning is important,” “cheating as an addiction,” “cheating as the easy way out,” and “cheating as a team effort.”

This research explores the linkage between cheating and game playing and perceptions. Moreover, it considers factors such as gender, ethnicity, grade level, academic institution, major, technology uses, and other demographics to see if there are ties to cheating.

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