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Predicting Academic Dishonesty Using Personality, Impulsiveness, Morality, and Somatic Faking

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Abstract

Violations of academic honor are relative to many of the same factors that lead to dishonesty by individuals subject to the criminal justice system. Malingering is defined as the feigning of psychological or physical ailment for gain, which is a technique regularly used to exploit both academic institutions and the U.S. court system. While malingering in legal environments is generally to receive less harsh sentencing, access to drugs, or other benefits, the aim of faking illness in students is to avoid consequences for missing required classes or examinations. The purpose of this research is to identify the relationship between "faking-bad" symptoms, dishonesty, impulsivity, and personality traits, with the aim of identifying and preventing the abuse of the system caused by malingering in the future. This study was conducted at a small, private university using a self-report survey method to determine predictors of malingering in undergraduate students. Results found that academic dishonesty was positively correlated with moral disengagement, and negatively correlated with impulsiveness, honesty-humility, and conscientiousness.

Predicting Academic Dishonesty Using Personality, Impulsiveness, Morality, and Somatic Faking

Malingering in the criminal justice system for benefits and advantages over peers may not be so different from dishonesty in academic environments. Academic dishonesty is most often considered cheating on assignments or exams, however it could encompass any way to do the bare minimum amount of work and have an advantage over peers. Situations such as this can include lying about an illness or family emergency to get out of class or even clinical malingering of cognitive limitations in order to receive disability accommodations. The academic environment is already highly competitive before considering the potential of how many individuals unfairly take advantage of the system for less work than their peers. It is because of this that the establishment of predictors of academic dishonesty is important. Having concrete predictors of those who will be dishonest in academics will aid academic institutions in the development of programs or deterrents to avoid misuse of the system. The goal of the current study, therefore, is to assess the academic dishonesty of undergraduate students through self-report measures, and determine if there are any significant correlations between dishonesty and certain aspects of personality.

Research of malingering in the criminal justice system has a similar goal, which is to determine which individuals are most likely to be deceptive for their own gain. Marchi and Balboni (2018) conducted a study to determine which of three measures would be the most effective at the detection of malingering in criminal defendants. All participants had been diagnosed with mental illness after their imprisonment, those with diagnoses prior to this were considered genuine psychiatric patients and used as the control group. There was an additional simulated malingering group, instructed to fake a mental illness on the exams. Researchers predicted that the Negative Impression Management (NIM) measure (Morey, 1991) would be the

best detector over the Structured Inventory of Malingered Symptomatology (SIMS) (Smith & Burger, 1997) and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2) (Butcher, Dahlstrom, Graham, Tellegen & Kaemmer, 1989). Participants consisted of 151 male inmates in Northern Italy. These participants were administered the Italian version of the MMPI-2, the NIM scale of the Personality Assessment Inventory, and the SIMS. Marchi and Balboni (2018) found that the SIMS test was the only measurement with enough sensitivity to significantly detect suspected malingerers. However, while this measure detected 77% of malingerers, it also classified 51% of the control group as malingering, indicating that it generates a high amount of false positives. These results did not support the hypothesis that the NIM would be the best measure of malingering. This study showed that these malingering-detection measures are inherently problematic, because they will always over or under-identify subjects as malingerers. In response to this study, it should be important to note that there has not been an individual measure found in significantly detecting only malingerers, and not individuals with genuine mental illness. This encourages future research, such as the development of the present study, to look into other aspects that can be used to predict malingering symptoms.

A study analyzing malingering in a different form conducted a review of the Faking Bad Scale and has examined its success in detecting false personal injury claims. This research deviates from general malingering detection which is mostly done with only populations of inmates. To do this, Butcher, Arbisi, Atlis, and McNulty (2003) had the Faking Bad Scale completed by samples of personal injury suit subjects, patients of chronic pain, general medical and psychiatric patients, Veteran's Affairs (VA) patients, and correctional inmates. The purpose of the study was to determine the number of individuals deemed somatic malingerers[1] by the scale in each of the populations. The sample of VA hospital patients was made up of 901

psychiatric inpatients from a VA medical center, and the personal injury litigant sample consisted of 157 individuals undergoing forensic evaluation, all of whom were provided the MMPI-2. The remaining samples were obtained from a national database containing MMPI-2 scores which provided 108,791 cases for the evaluation of physical health, mental health, and correctional populations. The scale's internal consistency varies widely between Alpha .43 and .86 across samples (Butcher et al., 2003). The faking bad scale results showed that it detected an unusually high number of false positives among clinical patients. The highest population of malingerers was found to be female personal injury claimants, while the lowest was male correctional inmates. The researchers found that the scale overestimates malingering in clinical psychiatric samples, however may be a better measure of general somatic complaints (Butcher et al., 2003).

A more recently conducted study strove to determine predictable factors that lead to engagement in academic dishonesty. In measuring motivation, Peled, Eshet, Barczyk, and Grinautski (2019) predicted that online students would have higher intrinsic motivation and thus would cheat less in comparison to traditional students. In measuring personality traits, it was predicted that high extraversion, low conscientiousness and low agreeableness would predict cheating. Perception of faculty's attitude toward dishonest behavior would also be measured based on perceived opportunity. Participants consisted of 841 students from two U.S. colleges and 1634 students from four Israeli colleges. Of these two samples, 36% and 37% were online students, respectively. They were provided a survey with instruments measuring academic dishonesty, motivation, personality, attitude perception, and socio-demographic info. Peled et al. (2019) found that academic dishonesty was positively correlated with external motivation and traditional learning, and negatively with agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness, attitude measures, perceived opportunity, and age. Results support these hypotheses:

online students are less likely to show academic dishonesty, personality traits explain dishonest

behavior, and faculty member's attitudes were responsible for the extent of dishonest

engagement. This research outlines several predictors that may be used to determine the

likelihood of academic dishonesty, including several personality traits.

    To gain a better perspective on dishonesty, it has been studied across different

environments and modified to apply to academics. In this way, Predrag, Dragana, Dusanka, and

Nebojsa (2013) conducted research for the development of a personality-based instrument that

could accurately predict academic dishonesty. These researchers also chose to focus on

establishing predictors for dishonesty, rather than simply measuring it. The developed test, the

Academic Integrity Test (AIT) (Predrag et al., 2013), would be analyzed for validity and

weakness to faking. Researchers predicted that an integrity test, originally developed to predict

theft by employees, could be modified to significantly predict academic dishonesty. Participants

consisted of 350 undergraduate students in the first phase, and 471 students in the second phase,

all from seven universities in Serbia. In the first trial, participants were provided various

measures to aid the construction of the AIT. The second trial was to validate the measure, along

with the Big Five test and a cognitive ability test. Predrag et al. (2013) concluded that the AIT

had high internal consistency and gender differences were not significant. The highest correlation

discovered within the measure was consciousness and self-discipline. Other significant

correlations with dishonesty included negative valence, aggressiveness, and neuroticism. The

AIT was not correlated with the cognitive ability test, suggesting that dishonesty is not related to

cognitive ability. The results supported the general hypothesis that some personality traits are

predictive of academic dishonesty. This study translates the research of work integrity into

academics, in an attempt to assess individuals more prone to dishonesty. It also showed that

cognitive ability was unrelated to academic dishonesty.

Further research not only assesses specific personality traits with dishonesty, but the

measurement of these traits through differing personality models. To do this, Heck, Thielmann,

Moshagen, and Hilbig (2018) performed a meta-analysis of 16 previous research datasets on a

new regression model for cheating paradigms. The purpose was to analyze the effect size of the

HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised (HEXACO;Ashton & Lee, 2007) Honesty-Humility

(H-H) scale's link with cheating, and to compare the other trait's interactions with H-H.

Researchers hypothesized that cheating and the H-H scale will be negatively correlated. The H-H

scale was then predicted to positively correlate with Conscientiousness and Emotionality. Data

used came from studies which utilized dichotomous cheating paradigms and measured all six

HEXACO dimensions (Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, Extraversion, Agreeableness,

Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience). Studies included utilized both community and

student samples. The results concluded that the effect size of the H-H and cheating link was a

medium to large, .53. It also discovered that no other HEXACO trait had a significant association

with dishonesty. Age was found to be a statistically significant predictor of dishonesty, with age

negatively related to the likelihood of cheating. The main prediction was correct, with H-H being

the personality trait that was the strongest predictor of cheating. Predictions about subsequent

traits being correlated were all incorrect, however. These findings show that the H-H scale is the

best predictor of cheating across the HEXACO and other personality models such as the Big

Five (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Academic dishonesty research has expanded upon analyzing the relationships of

personality traits and has looked at other aspects of individual character as well. Risser and

Eckert (2016) focused on discovering the predictive relationships between psychopathic traits, moral disengagement, and gender on risky behaviors. Moral disengagement was measured through the Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement scale (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996), psychopathic traits were measured with the Youth Psychopathic Traits Inventory (Andershed, Kerr, Stattin, & Levander, 2002), and behavior was measured through an adaption of the Risky Behavior Questionnaire (Conger & Elder, 2004). Participants consisted of 181 undergraduate students. It was found that males reported more nonviolent aggressive behavior, moral disengagement, and psychopathic traits. Moral disengagement was found to positively associate with callous-unemotional traits, but remorselessness was the only trait to significantly correlate with risky behavior. In this case, examples of moral disengagement included "It is alright to lie to keep your friends out of trouble," "Stealing some money is not too serious compared to those who steal a lot of money," and "If people fight and misbehave at work, it is their superior's fault." In terms of academic dishonesty specifically, moral disengagement was the strongest predictor. The hypothesis was not supported because of remorselessness being the only predictor of risky behavior, and moral disengagement was the only predictor of academic dishonesty. While different results were found for males and females, both exhibited strong correlations between moral disengagement and academic dishonesty. This study provides clearer predictors of moral decision making and how individuals justify harmful actions.

Further research on moral decision making was conducted by Shu, Gino, and Bazerman (2011) which looked at the relationship between dishonesty and moral disengagement and if it led to a decline in ethical standards. Researchers predicted that moral disengagement increased when considering the behavior of self, rather than another person (i.e., first hypothesis). They

also predicted that permissive environments led to greater disengagement (i.e., second

hypothesis) and moral awareness led to less (i.e., third hypothesis). Participants consisted of 136

undergraduate and graduate students and were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. Each

condition was provided with a slightly different scenario about cheating, followed by a moral

disengagement questionnaire. Results indicated that moral disengagement was higher in cases of

the self rather than a peer (i.e., supporting the first hypothesis.) They also found that increased

opportunity for cheating made individuals increasingly morally lenient (supporting the second

hypothesis.) Participants also showed increased cheating behaviors if they were not provided

with an honor code to read, representing moral awareness (supporting the third hypothesis.)

These findings contribute to a more in-depth perspective of various aspects of moral

disengagement and how they relate to academic dishonesty. They also show how simple

intervention, such as moral awareness through providing an honor code as a preventative

measure for cheating. This study also provides evidence that an individual's morality is not fixed

and may vary depending on the circumstances. In relation to academic dishonesty, an individual

must have decided that the benefit they are striving for through dishonesty is more important

than abiding by the rules. If this tradeoff begins to occur regularly, the individual's morality

would shift in relation.

   Subsequent researchers have chosen to tie academic dishonesty back to criminals, the

original population studied for malingering. The purpose of a study by Williams and Williams

(2012) was to analyze the relationships between academic dishonesty and criminal behavior,

self-control, and recidivism. Their focus was on the general concept of deviance in academic

dishonesty, as opposed to other outlets of deviance, such as in the workplace. The predictions

were that criminality and recidivism would be positively correlated with dishonesty, while

self-control would be negatively correlated. Participants consisted of 171 undergraduate students from a New Zealand university. These students were provided a questionnaire which consisted of demographic questions, a self-control scale, the Scholastic Dishonesty scale (Eve & Bromley, 1981), and a Self-Report of Delinquency (Elliott & Ageton, 1980). The results showed that males were more likely to commit acts of academic dishonesty and that previous dishonest acts over the university career were predictive of dishonest acts that semester. Positive correlations were found for every count of criminality reported, except for property damage. Only a weak relationship was found to exist between dishonesty and self-control. In analyzing the data, there is a low prevalence of self reports of academic dishonesty because only 31% of participants reported any acts of dishonesty. This figure is lower than the prevalence rates of previous studies. All hypotheses were supported, however most relationships had a very weak correlation. The results obtained showed that previous history of dishonesty is the best predictor of its future occurrence. The biggest limitation of this study was the limited number of reported acts of dishonesty, suggesting a possible floor effect with academic dishonesty. This shows the need for providing reassurance and anonymity to participants. The use of the self-control scale showed slight correlation, and was the only internal variable measured in this study.

Identifying predictors of academic dishonesty has also led multiple researchers to test its relationship to impulsiveness. One study which does so, was intended to analyze the relationships between impulsiveness and personal efficacy, and academic motivation and cheating. Angell (2006) predicted that cheating would be positively correlated with impulsiveness and negatively correlated with personal efficacy and academic motivation. Participants consisted of undergraduate students from a private Catholic college and 61 individuals completed the scales. They received questionnaires containing the Academic

Integrity Scale (Angell, 2006), Impulsiveness vs Cautious Self-Control subscale (Kurtines, 1978), Personal Efficacy Scale (Paulus, 1983), Academic Motivation Scale (Vallerand, Pelletier, Blais, Briere, Senecal, & Vallieres, 1992), and the Responding Desirably on Attitudes and Opinions measure (Schuessler, Hittle, & Cardascia, 1978). Results relating to the academic integrity scale showed that the higher the level of dishonest behavior, the less wrong the individual considered it to be. Correlations in the academic motivation scale showed that higher motivation resulted in a less likelihood of cheating. Plagiarism was positively correlated with future well-being, thus individuals with low motivation but concern for their future are most likely to plagiarize. Impulsiveness and academic motivation were negatively correlated. All hypotheses were supported, however most of the correlations were very small. This research uniquely shows the importance of personal efficacy to academic dishonesty. Moving forward, this can be compared to moral disengagement in academics, in that they are both intrinsically motivated factors which strive for academic success. This study shows the significant relationship with academic dishonesty and impulsiveness which can be studied further.

The relationship between impulsiveness and dishonesty was thought to be so important that researchers developed a study to assess dishonesty with three subtypes of impulsiveness. Patton, Stanford, and Barratt (1995) thus studied impulsiveness further with research conducted across different populations. This research was to analyze the results of the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (Barratt, 1994) in order to revise it based on the factor structure of items. It was also to compare samples of inmates and psychiatric patients, with inmates predicted to have the highest average impulsiveness, but psychiatric patients, and specifically those with substance abuse history, were predicted to have higher than average impulsiveness. Participants included 412 undergraduates from Baylor University, 248 psychiatric inpatients, and 73 male inmates. The

measure itself is a 34 item, self-report questionnaire. Following data collection, factor analysis resulted in three sub-groups: attentional impulsiveness, motor impulsiveness, and non-planning impulsiveness. No significant sex differences were found. Researchers found that the undergraduate students scored lower than the inpatient sample, and both of these scored significantly lower than the inmate sample. These results supported both hypotheses made. The measure was also found to be internally consistent across populations with an average Cronbach's alpha of .81 (Patton, Stanford, & Barratt, 1995). These findings, especially the establishment of specific factors within the scale, can help future researchers in identifying relationships between subtle aspects of impulsiveness and mental illnesses.

Past research on academic dishonesty has found promise in the faking bad scale, the Honesty-Humility scale, moral disengagement, and impulsiveness in predicting dishonesty. Because of this, the present study will analyze the relationships between academic dishonesty and somatic faking bad, personality, moral disengagement, impulsiveness, gender, and athletic participation. This will help determine which factors are the strongest predictors and if they combine to significantly predict academic dishonesty. For this study I predict that academic dishonesty will be positively correlated with somatic malingering, moral disengagement, and impulsiveness. I predict that it will be negatively correlated with the honesty-humility and Conscientiousness scales. I also predict that males will have higher academic dishonesty scores in comparison to females, and that students involved in athletics will have lower academic dishonesty scores in comparison to non-athletes.

Method

Participants

The sample of participants in this study consisted of a total of $n= 64$ undergraduate students. Out of these, 8 (12.5%) were male, 55 (86%) were female and 1 (2%) responded as other. The breakdown of academic level consisted of 16 (25%) freshmen, 28 (44%) sophomore, 16 (25%) junior, and 4 (6%) senior undergraduate participants. The race demographics were 59 (92%) white, 3 (5%) African American, 1 (1.5%) Latino, and 1 (1.5%) other individuals. Of these students 13 (20%) reported being a varsity athlete, 7 (11%) reported being a club athlete, and 44 (69%) were neither. The average age of participants was $M= 20.23$ ($s=5.34$). In addition, the average QPA of participants was found to be $M= 3.5$ (0.4). Exclusions of measures occurred based on noncompletion. The only recruitment criteria was that participants be undergraduate students over 18 years of age. Recruitment took place through university-wide emails, as well as specifically to students of introductory psychology classes and to members of the honors college.

Participants were recruited from a small, private university in rural Virginia. No compensation was provided to participants.

Materials

The measure participants were asked to complete consisted of demographic questions and five scales. Before they were provided the measure however, they were asked to read and sign an informed consent form (see Appendix A).

Academic dishonesty. The independent variable of academic dishonesty was measured through the Scholastic Dishonesty Scale. The scale has a Cronbach's alpha of .805 (Williams & Williams, 2012) and consists of 10 items (see Appendix B). The original scale was modified from asking for the frequency of each action to asking the likelihood of each. This was to prevent social desirability bias because participants were likely to answer zero to every item for fear of punishment or judgement for any previous acts of academic dishonesty. Items are scored based on a Likert scale from 0 (very unlikely) to 3 (very likely) with higher overall scores indicating higher academic dishonesty. An example item is, "Indicate the likelihood that you would give another student answers during an exam."

Faking bad. The dependent variable of somatic faking bad was measured with the Lees-Haley Faking Bad Scale (Butcher, Arbisi, Atlis, & McNulty, 2003). This scale held a Chrombach's alpha of .85. The original scale contains 44 items, however some were removed due to irrelevance to the current research, leaving the modified scale with 38 items (see Appendix C). The tense of the scale was modified as well, asking for past instances of each item instead of asking if they were occurring in the present. The scale is scored based on the overall frequency of 22 continuous items, in addition to 16 items which are measured through true and false responses. Higher scores indicate higher instances of somatic faking bad. For example, one

item is "how many times you have used this item as an excuse to get out of an academic

obligation; I have a great deal of stomach trouble."

Impulsiveness. The dependent variable of impulsiveness was measured through the

Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (Patton, Stanford, & Barratt, 1995). The Chronbach's alpha of the

scale was .82 and reliability was tested through undergraduate students, the same population that

is examined in the present study. The scale consists of 34 items which are measured through true

and false responses (see Appendix D) with higher scores indicating higher impulsiveness. An

example item would be "I plan tasks carefully."

Moral disengagement. The dependent variable of moral disengagement was measured

through the Moral Disengagement about Cheating Scale (Shu, Gino, & Bazerman, 2011). This

scale consists of six items and has a strong Chronbach's alpha of .91 (see Appendix E). The scale

is measured through a Likert scale of -3 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree) with higher

scores indicating higher moral disengagement. For example, "Sometimes getting ahead of the

curve is more important than adhering to rules."

Personality. The final dependent variable of personality traits was measured with the

HEXACO Personality Model (Ashton, Lee, Perugini, Szarota, de Vries, Di Blas, . . . De Raad,

2004). This scale contains six individual subscales, measuring six specific personality traits.

Each scale showed strong reliability: Honesty/Humility (Cronbach's alpha of .71), Emotionality

(Cronbach's alpha of .72), Extraversion (Cronbach's alpha of .76), Agreeableness (Cronbach's

alpha of. 74), Conscientiousness (Cronbach's alpha of .71), and Openness (Cronbach's alpha of

.70) (see Appendix F). This scale contained 60 items and was scored based on a Likert scale

from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Higher scores of individual subscales indicate

that an individual is stronger in that specific trait. An example item from the honesty/humility

subscale is "I wouldn't use flattery to get a raise or promotion at work, even if I thought it would succeed."

Procedure

Data were analyzed using a cross sectional, correlational design. A multiple regression analysis was run to determine whether predictor variables of faking bad, impulsiveness, moral disengagement, and personality can predict the outcome variable of academic dishonesty. The order of subscales was counterbalanced across two versions of the measure to account for possible order effects. Recruitment emails sent included a link to a Google form where participants could anonymously sign up for a date and time for their participation. As soon as participants arrive in the classroom at their chosen timeslot, they were given a hard copy of the informed consent form which was read aloud by the researcher. The participant would be given the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had and, once they were comfortable, they were asked to sign the informed consent which was then collected by the researcher. The participant would then be given a hard copy of the measure containing demographic questions and five subscales. They were randomly assigned to either version A or version B of the measure; the only difference being the order of the subscales. The entire measure took approximately 30 mins and participation only lasted for one session per participant. Following completion of the measure, the researcher collected the hard copy and debriefed the study with them.

Results

In order to analyze the relationships between academic dishonesty and somatic faking

bad, personality, moral disengagement, impulsiveness, gender, and athletic participation, a

Pearson correlation was run, followed by a multiple regression and an independent sample t-test.

Table 1

Table Showing Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variable	*Statistic*
Academic Dishonesty	$M = 4.47$ ($s=3.7$)
Faking Bad Score	$M = 93.8$ ($s=176.35$)
Impulsiveness	$M = 52.52$ ($s=3.36$)
Moral Disengagement	$M = -3.45$ ($s=6.63$)
Honesty-Humility	$M = 33.97$ ($s=6.44$)
Emotionality	$M = 35.39$ ($s=7.38$)
Extraversion	$M = 24.32$ ($s=6.2$)
Agreeableness	$M = 30.66$ ($s=6.29$)
Conscientiousness	$M = 37.13$ ($s=6.23$)
Openness to Experience	$M = 33.42$ ($s=5.73$)

Descriptive statistics found the average scores of all measures taken by the participants:

see Table 1. It was found that the average score of academic dishonesty was $M= 4.47$ ($s=3.7$). It

was also found that the average faking bad score was $M= 93.8$ ($s=176.35$). The average

impulsiveness score was found to be *M*= 52.52 (*s*=3.36). It was also found that the average moral

disengagement score was *M*= -3.45 (*s*=6.63). The average score of the Honesty-Humility scale

was found to be *M*= 33.97 (*s*=6.44). The average Emotionality scale score was found to be *M*=

35.39 (*s*=7.38). The average score of the Extraversion scale was found to be *M*= 24.32 (*s*=6.2).

The average Agreeableness scale score was found to be *M*= 30.66 (*s*=6.29). The average score of

the Conscientiousness scale was found to be *M*= 37.13 (*s*=6.23). The average Openness to

Experience scale score was found to be *M*= 33.42 (*s*=5.73).

A Pearson correlation was used to determine if there was a relationship between moral

disengagement and academic dishonesty. A positive correlation was observed between the two

variables, *r*(61)=.63, *p*<.001. This indicates that with a higher moral disengagement score,

individuals are more likely to be academically dishonest. A second Pearson correlation was used

to determine if there was a relationship between impulsiveness and academic dishonesty. A

negative correlation was observed between the two variables, *r*(61)=-.24, *p*=.028. This indicates

that with a lower impulsiveness score, individuals are more likely to be academically dishonest.

A third Pearson correlation was used to determine if there was a relationship between

Honesty-Humility and academic dishonesty. A negative correlation was observed between the

two variables, *r*(61)=-.22, *p*=.04. This indicates that with a lower Honesty-Humility score,

individuals are more likely to be academically dishonest. Finally, a fourth Pearson correlation

was used to determine if there was a relationship between Conscientiousness and academic

dishonesty. A negative correlation was observed between the two variables, *r*(61)=-.24, *p*=.03.

This indicates that with a lower Conscientiousness score, individuals are more likely to be

academically dishonest. Finally, no significant differences were found between males and

females on academic dishonesty, as well as no significant differences between athletes and

non-athletes.

Following this, a multiple regression was used to determine if moral disengagement,

impulsiveness, Honesty-Humility, and Conscientiousness predict academic dishonesty. The

overall model with four predictors account for 40% of the variance in academic dishonesty,

(R=.66, *Adj R^2*=.40). The overall model with four predictor variables is statistically significant

in predicting academic dishonesty, $F(4,59)$=11.64, p<.001. Moral disengagement is positively

related to academic dishonesty, B=.66, $t(59)$=5.73, p<.001). In summary, higher moral

disengagement score predicts higher academic dishonesty even after controlling for

impulsiveness, Honesty-Humility, and Conscientiousness.

In addition, an independent sample t-test was conducted to compare all variables with

high and low conditions of academic dishonesty. An independent sample t-test compared

Honesty-Humility in high academic dishonesty and low academic dishonesty conditions. The

Honesty-Humility in individuals with low academic dishonesty (*M*=35.89, *SD*=4.89), is

significantly different from the Honesty-Humility in individuals with high academic dishonesty

(*M*=32.48, *SD*=7.06), $t(53.56)$=2.17, p=.045. Specifically, individuals with low academic

dishonesty have more Honesty-Humility traits than individuals with high academic dishonesty.

All other variables analyzed showed no significant difference between high and low conditions

of academic dishonesty.

Discussion

Cheating and academic dishonesty is a phenomenon that takes place in some form at every academic institution and carries with it unfair advantages for those students who are not willing to do the same amount of work as their peers. The purpose of this research was to identify personality traits in students that could significantly predict the likelihood for acts of academic dishonesty. The hypotheses that were established for this study were partially supported by the testing results. The significant positive correlation seen between academic dishonesty and moral disengagement was correctly predicted. In addition, the two negative correlations seen between academic dishonesty and Honesty-Humility, as well as academic dishonesty and Conscientiousness, were also predicted correctly beforehand. The only result that was not in the direction of the hypothesis was the significant negative correlation between academic dishonesty and impulsiveness. This was hypothesized to be a positive correlation instead. Additional predictions involving somatic faking bad, gender, and athletic involvement had no significant results.

The positive correlation between academic dishonesty and moral disengagement suggests that individuals who have high moral disengagement are more likely to commit acts of dishonesty. This supports the idea that individuals who do not feel the responsibility of upholding the ethical standards of society would also feel less guilty about being academically dishonest. These results also support the previous findings of Risser and Eckert (2016) which

showed that moral disengagement was the most significant predictor of academic dishonesty in comparison to psychopathic traits, risky behavior, and gender which were also analyzed.

The most unexpected finding discovered was the negative correlation between academic dishonesty and impulsiveness in students. The finding suggests that individuals who are less impulsive, therefore they take more consideration before making a choice or an action, are more likely to be academically dishonest. In their research, Patton et al. (1995) found a positive correlation between impulsiveness and dishonesty, in both undergraduate and inmate populations which contradicts the present results. This finding could be explained by the fact that some cheating requires preparation and discretion for success. For example, if a non-impulsive individual decided that they did not want to study for a test but wanted a good grade, they could prepare answers in advance to sneak into the testing room. If an impulsive individual decided not to study on the other hand, they are less likely to prepare answers in advance, and may choose to skip the test or to take it and simply guess at the answers. Within the findings of Angell (2006), impulsiveness was negatively correlated with academic motivation, and academic motivation was negatively correlated with cheating. Impulsiveness, therefore, seems to be related to academic dishonesty. It is possible however, that high impulsiveness accounts for the individuals who do not have high academic motivation, but also choose not to be dishonest. This alternate explanation would account for the negative correlation found in the present study and should be researched further in the future.

The negative correlation that was seen between academic dishonesty and the Honesty-Humility scale within the HEXACO personality inventory suggests that individuals who have low honesty and humility traits are more likely to perform dishonest acts. This supports the idea that individuals who take pride in completing their own work and maintaining

high ethical standards will be likely to not cheat. This result supports the findings of Heck et al. (2018), which found Honesty-Humility to be the best predictor of cheating across both the HEXACO and Big Five personality inventory models.

Further, the negative correlation between academic dishonesty and Conscientiousness suggests that individuals with low Conscientiousness are more likely to be academically dishonest. This finding supports the idea that individuals who have more diligence and tend to do a more thorough job completing their work, are thus less likely to cheat. The results also support the findings of Peled et al. (2019), in that it was also found that academic dishonesty was negatively correlated with Conscientiousness in undergraduate students.

Significant results were not found regarding the relationship between academic dishonesty and somatic faking bad. A possible explanation for this may be that students were less likely to be forthcoming with a number of times that they falsified somatic symptoms as an excuse to get out of an academic requirement. Also asking participants to estimate the number of times that they have done this may not have produced accurate enough data to result in significance. In addition, a significant relationship was also not found between academic dishonesty and gender. Although research such as that of Williams and Williams (2012), suggests that males are more likely to commit acts of academic dishonesty, the present study did not find evidence supporting this. This is possibly due to the lack of diversity in participants' genders, seeing that 86% of participants were female. Finally, the variable of athletic involvement found no significant relationship with academic dishonesty either. This may also be due to a limited number of athletes participating in the study, with 69% of participants being non-athletes. However, it is possible that student athletes are just as likely to cheat as non-athletes.

Limitations of the present study include the limited ability to generalize the conclusions of this sample to the undergraduate population. The sample was predominantly female and white, when compared to the population of the university studied for this research. The university environment is only representative of private institutions and may not represent students attending public schools or community colleges. Also with participants only being from a single university in one region of the country, the sample is not representative of any other geographic location. In addition, students being asked to admit academic dishonesty may feel paranoid about telling the truth, regardless of anonymity. This could have possibly led to results that were not entirely accurate, especially those representing high amounts of academic dishonesty. Social desirability bias by participants could also have led to them answering in ways that were less likely to represent high academic dishonesty.

The findings this study provides shows that there is promise in utilizing personality traits to predict academic dishonesty in students. The biggest predictor found was moral disengagement, something that should be studied more in depth in regards to academics. Research in moral disengagement should focus on effective methods to test for it as well as methods to decrease this trait in younger children. If moral disengagement can be discouraged at a younger age, possibly through teaching the importance of following rules and abiding by ethics, then perhaps academic dishonesty would have decreased in frequency by the time the students are undergraduates. Similarly, aspects of honesty and humility in individuals should be tested further in regards to dishonesty. While the Honesty-Humility scale was not as strong of a predictor as moral disengagement, it did show a significant difference in high and low conditions of dishonesty. The development and internalization of honesty in children should be studied and compared with their academic dishonesty over time. In addition, the relationship between

academic dishonesty and impulsiveness should be examined further to determine if high

impulsiveness represents students with low academic motivation but also a low willingness for

dishonesty. Overall this study showed that there are personality traits that are more likely to

influence individuals to act dishonestly, and those that were found represent the internalization of

ethical standards, both positively and negatively. Research of this type will further the

understanding of what leads people to use dishonesty as a method to advance academically and

will also provide institutions with ways to discourage individuals from continuing to do so.

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Footnotes

[1] Somatic Malingering is defined as the intentional faking of physical illness through the exaggeration of symptoms. Malingering indicates that this is for external incentive, to differentiate from psychological factitious disorder.

Appendix A

Informed Consent Agreement

Please read this consent agreement (or listen carefully if it is being read to you) before you decide to participate in the research study. Please keep a copy for your records.

Project Title: Predicting Academic Dishonesty Through Personality, Impulsiveness, Morality, and Somatic Faking.

Purpose: The purpose of this research study is to determine if somatic faking bad, moral disengagement, personality traits, and impulsiveness are predictive factors of academic dishonesty in undergraduate students.

Participation: As a participant in this study, you will be asked to fill out a survey containing items regarding your personality traits and academic behavioral patterns. Participation will take place at an agreed time and location between the researcher and participant.

Time Required: Your participation is expected to take a maximum of 45 minutes for a session. There will be only one session.

Voluntary Participation: Please understand that participation is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate and/or answer any question(s) for any reason, without penalty. You also have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. If you want to withdraw from the study please tell the researcher or a member of the research team who is present during your participation.

Potential Risks: The potential risks associated with this study are feelings of anxiety or stress regarding answering questions about academic dishonesty and fear of getting in trouble for your answers. However, your answers will remain entirely confidential and the only people allowed access to your answers are the student researcher and the faculty advisor for the project. If you leave with feelings of anxiety or stress, you may reach out to the University of Lynchburg's counseling center in Hundley Hall or at 434-544-8616. In addition, if you begin to feel anxious or uncomfortable during your involvement, you may stop and leave at any point during the session without penalty (i.e., you will still get your points).

Potential Benefits: The potential benefits associated with this study are contributing to research on academic dishonesty which may aid academic institutions in developing preventative measures in the future, so that individuals are not allowed unfair advantages. Benefits for the participants' may include making you more cognitively aware of your academic choices as you think about and answer the items. This could also be an introspective opportunity for participants to consider your personality factors and ethical decision making as well.

Compensation: You will not receive compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality: Your individual privacy will be maintained throughout this study. In order to preserve the confidentiality of your responses, you will be assigned a participant ID number for the survey and your name will not be recorded. In addition the data will be collected on hard copies, which will then be stored in a locked cabinet in the office of a faculty advisor on the University of Lynchburg's campus. The student researcher and that faculty member will be the only ones with access to the data. The data will be kept for a minimum of three years, as this is the federal expectation.

Whom to Contact with Questions: If you have any questions or would like additional information about this research, please contact Lauren Barbee at Barbee_L@lynchburg.edu. You can also contact my faculty research advisor, Ei Hlaing, at Hlaing_e@lynchburg.edu, who is the Principal Investigator (PI) for this project and is supervising my work on the study. The University of Lynchburg Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Subjects Research has approved this project. This IRB currently does not stamp approval on the informed consent/assent documents; however, an approval number is assigned to approved studies – the approval number for this study is LHS1920057. You may contact the IRB Director, Dr. Alisha Walker Marciano, through the Office of the Associate Provost at the University of Lynchburg at 434.544.8367 or irb-hs@lynchburg.edu with any questions or concerns related to this research study.

Agreement: I understand the above information and have had all of my questions about participation in this research study answered. By signing below I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study described above and verify that I am 18 years of age or older.

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

Printed Name of Participant _____

Signature of Researcher _____ Date _____

Printed Name of Researcher _____

Appendix B

Scholastic Dishonesty Scale (Williams & Williams, 2012)

Indicate the likelihood that you would do the following in an academic environment.

0 = Very Unlikely, 1 = Unlikely, 2 = Likely, 3 = Very Likely

_____ Give another student answers during an exam

_____ Write papers for another student

 _____ Develop a relationship with instructor to get test information

_____ Use notes or books during a test when prohibited

_____ Sell paper to another student

_____ Look at stolen copy of test questions

_____ Copy answers from another student during exam

_____ To glance at other people's exam papers during the exam

_____ Purchase paper from another student

_____ Submit paper written by other student

Appendix C

Lees-Haley Faking Bad Scale (Butcher, Arbisi, Atlis, & McNulty, 2003)

Answer how many times you have used each item as an excuse to get out of an academic

obligation (i.e. class, exam, ect.) from middle school to the present.

There seems to be a lump in my throat. ____

I am troubled by attacks of nausea and vomiting. ____

I am bothered by an upset stomach. ____

Much of the time my head seems to hurt all over. ____

I suddenly feel hot all over, for no real reason. ____

I am troubled by discomfort in the pit of my stomach. ____

I have a great deal of stomach trouble. ____

I feel pain in the back of my neck. ____

I have vomited blood or coughed up blood. ____

I have dizzy spells. ____

I have headaches. ____

I notice my ears ringing or buzzing. ____

I have nightmares every few nights. ____

My sleep is fitful and disturbed. ____

I find it hard to keep my mind on a task or job. ____

I sometimes feel that I am about to go to pieces. ____

I have more trouble concentrating than others seem to have. ____

I am feeling much pressure or stress these days. ____

I feel tired a good deal of the time. ____

I have sometimes felt that difficulties were piling up so high that I could not overcome them.

____

I am so sick of what I have to do every day that I just want to get out of it all. ____

I have recently considered killing myself. ____

I tire quickly. ____

Please answer the following True or False.

I am so touchy on some subjects that I can't talk about them. ____

I do not always tell the truth. ____

I think a great many people exaggerate their misfortunes in order to gain the sympathy and help

of others. ____

I think most people would lie to get ahead. ____

Most people will use somewhat unfair means to gain profit or an advantage rather than to lose it.

____

I don't blame people for trying to grab everything they can get in this world. ____

I do not blame a person for taking advantage of people who leave themselves open to it. ____

At times I have been so entertained by the cleverness of some criminals that I have hoped they

would get away with it. ____

I have used alcohol excessively. ____

I think nearly anyone would tell a lie to keep out of trouble. ____

I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something. ____

I have done some bad things in the past that I never tell anybody about. ____

Most people will use somewhat unfair means to get ahead in life. ____

There are certain people whom I dislike so much that I am inwardly pleased when they are

catching it for something they have done. ____

When I am cornered I tell that portion of the truth which is not likely to hurt me. ____

Appendix D

Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (Patton, Stanford, & Barratt, 1995)

Please answer the following True or False.

I plan tasks carefully. _____

I do things without thinking. _____

I make-up my mind quickly. _____

I am happy-go-lucky. _____

I don't "pay attention." _____

I have "racing" thoughts. _____

I plan trips well ahead of time. _____

I am self-controlled. _____

I concentrate easily. _____

I save regularly. _____

I "squirm" at plays or lectures. _____

I am a careful thinker. _____

I plan for job security. _____

I say things without thinking. _____

I like to think about complex problems. _____

I change jobs. _____

I act "on impluse." _____

I get easily bored when solving thought problems. _____

I have regular health check ups. _____

I act on the spur of the moment. _____

I am a steady thinker. _____

I change residences. _____

I buy things on impulse. _____

I can only think about one problem at a time. _____

I change hobbies. _____

I walk and move fast. ____

I solve problems by trial-and-error. ____

I spend or charge more than I earn. ____

I talk fast. ____

I often have extraneous thoughts when thinking. ____

I am more interested in the present than the future. ____

I am restless at the theater or lectures. ____

I like puzzles. ____

I am future oriented. ____

Appendix E

Moral Disengagement about Cheating Scale (Shu, Gino, & Bazerman, 2011)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements

(-3 = Strongly Disagree, $+3$ = Strongly Agree):

Sometimes getting ahead of the curve is more important than adhering to rules.

-3   -2   -1   0   1   2   3

Rules should be flexible enough to be adapted to different situations.

-3   -2   -1   0   1   2   3

Cheating is appropriate behavior because no one gets hurt.

-3   -2   -1   0   1   2   3

If others engage in cheating behavior, then the behavior is morally permissible.

-3   -2   -1   0   1   2   3

It is appropriate to seek short-cuts as long as it is not at someone else's expense.

-3   -2   -1   0   1   2   3

End results are more important than the means by which one pursues those results.

-3   -2   -1   0   1   2   3

Appendix F

HEXACO Personality Model (Ashton, Lee, Perugini, Szarota, de Vries, Di Blas, . . . De Raad,

2004)

On the following pages you will find a series of statements about you. Please read each

statement and decide how much you agree or disagree with that statement. Then write

your response in the space next to the statement using the following scale:

5 = strongly agree

4 = agree

3 = neutral (neither agree nor disagree)

2 = disagree

1 = strongly disagree

Please answer every statement, even if you are not completely sure of your response.

_____ I would be quite bored by a visit to an art gallery.

_____ I plan ahead and organize things, to avoid scrambling at the last minute.

_____ I rarely hold a grudge, even against people who have badly wronged me.

_____ I feel reasonably satisfied with myself overall.

_____ I would feel afraid if I had to travel in bad weather conditions.

_____ I wouldn't use flattery to get a raise or promotion at work, even if I thought it would

succeed.

_____ I'm interested in learning about the history and politics of other countries.

_____ I often push myself very hard when trying to achieve a goal.

_____ People sometimes tell me that I am too critical of others.

_____ I rarely express my opinions in group meetings.

_____ I sometimes can't help worrying about little things.

_____ If I knew that I could never get caught, I would be willing to steal a million dollars.

_____ I would enjoy creating a work of art, such as a novel, a song, or a painting.

_____ When working on something, I don't pay much attention to small details.

_____ People sometimes tell me that I'm too stubborn.

_____ I prefer jobs that involve active social interaction to those that involve working alone.

_____ When I suffer from a painful experience, I need someone to make me feel comfortable.

_____ Having a lot of money is not especially important to me.

_____ I think that paying attention to radical ideas is a waste of time.

_____ I make decisions based on the feeling of the moment rather than on careful thought.

_____ People think of me as someone who has a quick temper.

_____ On most days, I feel cheerful and optimistic.

_____ I feel like crying when I see other people crying.

_____ I think that I am entitled to more respect than the average person is.

_____ If I had the opportunity, I would like to attend a classical music concert.

_____ When working, I sometimes have difficulties due to being disorganized.

_____ My attitude toward people who have treated me badly is "forgive and forget".

_____ I feel that I am an unpopular person.

_____ When it comes to physical danger, I am very fearful.

_____ If I want something from someone, I will laugh at that person's worst jokes.

_____ I've never really enjoyed looking through an encyclopedia.

_____ I do only the minimum amount of work needed to get by.

_____ I tend to be lenient in judging other people.

_____ In social situations, I'm usually the one who makes the first move.

_____ I worry a lot less than most people do.

_____ I would never accept a bribe, even if it were very large.

_____ People have often told me that I have a good imagination.

_____ I always try to be accurate in my work, even at the expense of time.

_____ I am usually quite flexible in my opinions when people disagree with me.

_____ The first thing that I always do in a new place is to make friends.

_____ I can handle difficult situations without needing emotional support from anyone else.

_____ I would get a lot of pleasure from owning expensive luxury goods.

_____ I like people who have unconventional views.

_____ I make a lot of mistakes because I don't think before I act.

_____ Most people tend to get angry more quickly than I do.

_____ Most people are more upbeat and dynamic than I generally am.

_____ I feel strong emotions when someone close to me is going away for a long time.

_____ I want people to know that I am an important person of high status.

_____ I don't think of myself as the artistic or creative type.

_____ People often call me a perfectionist.

_____ Even when people make a lot of mistakes, I rarely say anything negative.

_____ I sometimes feel that I am a worthless person.

_____ Even in an emergency I wouldn't feel like panicking.

_____ I wouldn't pretend to like someone just to get that person to do favors for me.

_____ I find it boring to discuss philosophy.

_____ I prefer to do whatever comes to mind, rather than stick to a plan.

_____ When people tell me that I'm wrong, my first reaction is to argue with them.

_____ When I'm in a group of people, I'm often the one who speaks on behalf of the group.

_____ I remain unemotional even in situations where most people get very sentimental.

_____ I'd be tempted to use counterfeit money, if I were sure I could get away with it.