

***It's wrong, I did it, but  
don't feel guilty***

**Understanding students' beliefs, behaviours,  
and emotions related to academic  
dishonesty**

**Jason M. Stephens, Ph.D.**  
The University of Auckland

An invited address at the



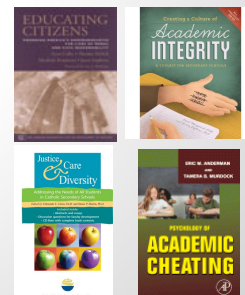
5.º CONGRESO  
DE INTEGRIDAD  
ACADÉMICA

in Monterrey, Mexico

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**Jason M. Stephens, Ph.D.**

- Associate Professor in the School of Learning, Development, and Professional Practice in the Faculty of Education and Social Work at The University of Auckland.
- Lead Educator of *Academic Integrity: Values, Skills, Action*—a MOOC:  
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/academic-integrity>
- Research focuses on the interaction of motivation, morality, and academic misconduct during adolescence.
- Author of two books and numerous articles and chapters on promoting moral development and academic integrity.



## Acknowledgments and Thanks

### David Wangaard

Executive Director of The School for Ethical Education  
Co-Principal Investigator of *The Achieving with Integrity* Project



### Schools, Teachers, and Students

The dozens schools, scores of teachers, and thousands of students who have participated in the AwI Project

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### Universidad de Monterrey and all of you!

*Gracias por invitarme y estar aquí esta mañana.*

## Agenda—The Big Picture

### Four Suppositions about Deception and Dishonesty

It's *natural* and the *norm*, but *unethical* and *avertible*

### Understanding the Problem of Academic Dishonesty

*Why do students cheat, even when they believe it's wrong?*

### As a Possibility for Promoting Moral Development

A multi-level approach to cultivating student integrity

### Discussion

Your Questions, Comments, Critiques, and Suggestions

# Supposition #1

## *Cheating as “Natural”*

### *(of Nature)*

Stephens, J. M. (2017). How to cheat and not feel guilty: Cognitive dissonance and its amelioration in the domain of academic dishonesty. *Theory Into Practice*. doi:10.1080/00405841.2017.1283571

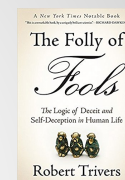
## The “Nature” of Cheating

### Deception in the natural world is

- **ubiquitous** - seen everywhere in the plant and animal kingdoms
- **essential** - necessary for *survival* and/or *reproductive success* (RS)

### Mimicry is the primary form of deception, like

- **copying and plagiarism** - *appropriating* the traits or characteristics of another species or their work and representing them as your own...



## Deception in Nature for *Survival*

*Which is a deadly threat and which safe to pet?*



**Texas Coral Snake**  
 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Micrurus\_tener



**Mexican Milk Snake**  
 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milk\_snake

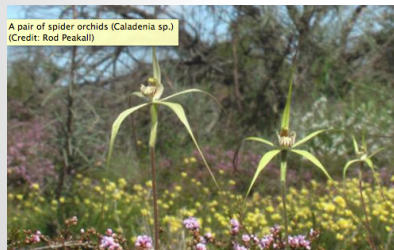
*“Red on yellow can kill a fellow. Red on black venom it lacks.”*

## Deception in Nature for *RS*

*How do Orchids trick Bees?*

### 1. “Sexy Scent”

- Release of perfume that mimics the pheromones of a fertile female wasp



A pair of spider orchids (Caladenia sp.) (Credit: Rod Peakall)

### 2. “Visual Lures”

- A labellum (“lip”), a landing platform that mimics the body of a female wasp



A hammer orchid (Drakaea livida) (Credit: Rod Peakall)

<http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20150202-three-ways-orchids-trick-insects>

## Human (Un)Exceptionality

*Aren't we humans different?*

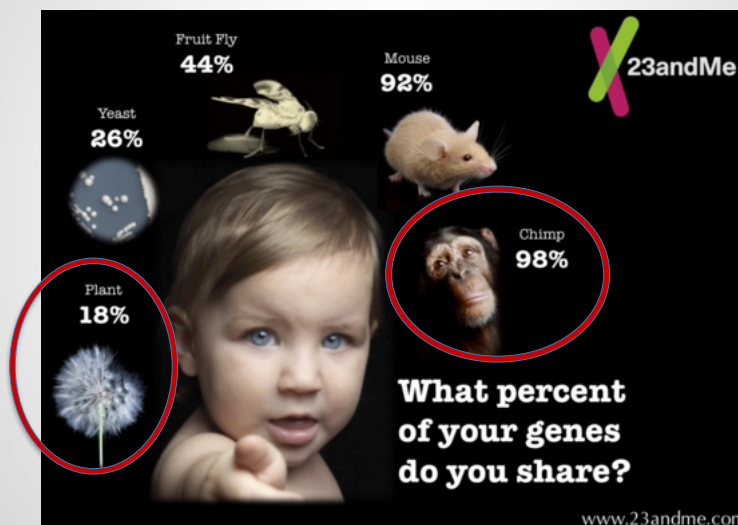
**Yes, and**

- We have a well-developed neo-cortex, and with it the
- Gift of Self-Awareness, and with it the
- Curse of Ego, and the need to project and protect it.

**No**

- We are still animals, and as such still
- Subject to the Darwinian dynamics...

## Our Shared Genetic Inheritance



## Supposition #2

*Cheating as the Norm*

*(most report doing it)*

## Cheating as “Epidemic”

**επι' δεινικ/** 1: *affecting or tending to affect a disproportionately large number of individuals within a population, community, or region at the same time.* 2: *excessively prevalent* (Merriam-Webster)

### Most Students Cheat

- **Secondary:** 80.6% “copied another's homework”; 33.9% “copied an Internet document for a classroom assignment”; 54.9% had “cheated during a test at school” (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2011)
- **Tertiary:** 42% unpermitted collaboration; 36% copying a few sentences in a paper without attribution; 30% receiving test answers/questions from someone who had already taken the test (McCabe et al 2012).



## Academic Dishonesty in the USA

### Conventional and Digital Cheating among Secondary Students

Variable	Cheating Behavior		
	Conventional	Digital	
Copied homework	<b>84.5%</b> By hand or in person: Copied all or part of another student's homework and submitted it as your own	Using digital means such as Instant Messaging or email: Copied all or part of another student's homework and submitted it as your own	<b>40.2%</b>
Unpermitted collaboration	<b>81.4%</b> In person: Worked on an assignment with others when the instructor asked for individual work	Online via email or Instant Messaging: Worked on an assignment with others when the instructor asked for individual work	<b>49.5%</b>
Plagiarized a few sentences	<b>46.6%</b> From a book, magazine, or journal (not on the Internet): Paraphrased or copied a few sentences or paragraphs without citing them in a paper you submitted	From an Internet Website: Paraphrased or copied a few sentences or paragraphs without citing them in a paper you submitted	<b>60.4%</b>
Plagiarized a complete paper	<b>20.2%</b> From a friend or another student: Obtained or purchased a complete paper and submitted it as your own work	From an Internet Website: Obtained or purchased a complete paper and submitted as your own work	<b>13.6%</b>
Used unpermitted notes during an exam	<b>44.5%</b> Used unpermitted notes or textbooks during a test or exam	Used unpermitted electronic notes (stored in a PDA, phone or calculator) during or exam	<b>27.2%</b>
Copied from someone else during an exam	<b>60.5%</b> From a friend or another student: Copied from another's paper during a test or exam with his or her knowledge	Used digital technology such as text messaging to "copy" or get help from someone during a test or exam	<b>23.5%</b>

## Academic Dishonesty among Undergraduates in the USA

TABLE 2  
Mean Percentages and Paired Sample Statistics for Student Engagement in Conventional Versus Digital Forms of Cheating Behavior

Variable	Cheating Behavior		
	Conventional	Digital	$\chi^2(1, N = 1,305)$
Copied homework	35.8	11.3	283.80***
Unpermitted collaboration	42.8	22.7	190.57***
Plagiarized a few sentences	30.7	32.2	1.87
Plagiarized a complete paper	1.9	0.5	—
Used unpermitted notes during a test or exam	8.3	10.8	6.16**
Copied from someone else during a test or exam	8.6	1.8	66.40***
Overall	63.8	49.8	112.20***

\* $p = .05$ . \*\* $p = .01$ . \*\*\* $p = .001$ .

Stephens, J. M., Young, M. F., & Calabrese, T. (2007). Does moral judgment go offline when students are online? A comparative analysis of undergraduates' beliefs and behaviors related to conventional and digital cheating. *Ethics & Behavior*, 17(3), 233-254. doi:10.1080/10508420701519197

## Academic Dishonesty Around the World

	USA (2010)	Ukraine (2010)	China (2013)	New Zealand (2017)
<u>Homework Cheating</u>				
Copied from Another Student	30.7%	72.0%	71.0%	26.5%
Unpermitted Collaboration	50.3%	83.0%	81.0%	61.2%
<u>Plagairism</u>				
Conventional: Few Sentences	8.0%	57.4%	59.0%	33.8%
Digital: Few Sentences	16.5%	77.7%	NA	47.7%
<u>Test Cheating</u>				
Copied from Another Student	22.3%	64.7%	48.0%	12.1%
Used Unpermmited Notes	11.1%	81.9%	46.0%	5.5%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>65.6%</b>	<b>97.4%</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>78.3%</b>

Note . NA = Not Available

- Ma, Y., McCabe, D., & Liu, R. (2013). Students' Academic Cheating in Chinese Universities: Prevalence, Influencing Factors, and Proposed Action. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 11(3), 169-184. doi:10.1007/s10805-013-9186-7
- Stephens, J. M., Alansari, M., Watson, P., Lee, G., & Turnbull, S. (in preparation). Changes in motivation, mores, and misconduct: Results from a natural experiment....
- Stephens, J. M., Romakin, V., & Yukhymenko, M. (2010). Academic motivation and misconduct in two cultures: A comparative analysis of U.S. and Ukrainian undergraduates. *International Journal of Educational Integrity*, 6(1), 47-60.

## Supposition #3

*Cheating as “Unethical”*

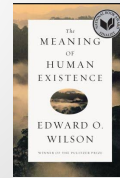
*(it's morally wrong)*



## Our Dual Natures

*We are all genetic chimeras, at once **saints and sinners**, champions of the truth and hypocrites – not because humanity has failed to reach some foreordained religious or ideological ideal, but because of the way our species originated across millions of years of biological evolution.*

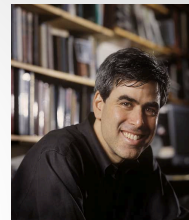
- E.O. Wilson



## Moral Foundations Theory

### The Meaning of Morality

Moral systems are interlocking sets of values, practices, institutions, and evolved psychological mechanisms that work together to suppress or regulate selfishness and make social life possible.



Jonathan Haidt  
New York University

### Five “Intuitive Ethics”

1. **Care/Harm:** Concern for others; no hurting them physically or emotionally.
2. **Fairness/Cheating:** Justice, treating others equally; no lying to/cheating them.
3. **Loyalty/Betrayal:** Fidelity to your group, family, nation; no betrayal.
4. **Authority/Subversion:** Respect for tradition/authority; no deviance/defiance.
5. **Sanctity/Degradation:** Keeping pure; no disgusting/unhealthy things/actions.

Click here for more on [Moral Foundations Theory](#)

# Social Cognitive Domain Theory

## The Meaning of Morality

*"prescriptive judgments of justice, rights, and welfare pertaining to how people ought to relate to each other."*



Elliot Turiel  
University of California

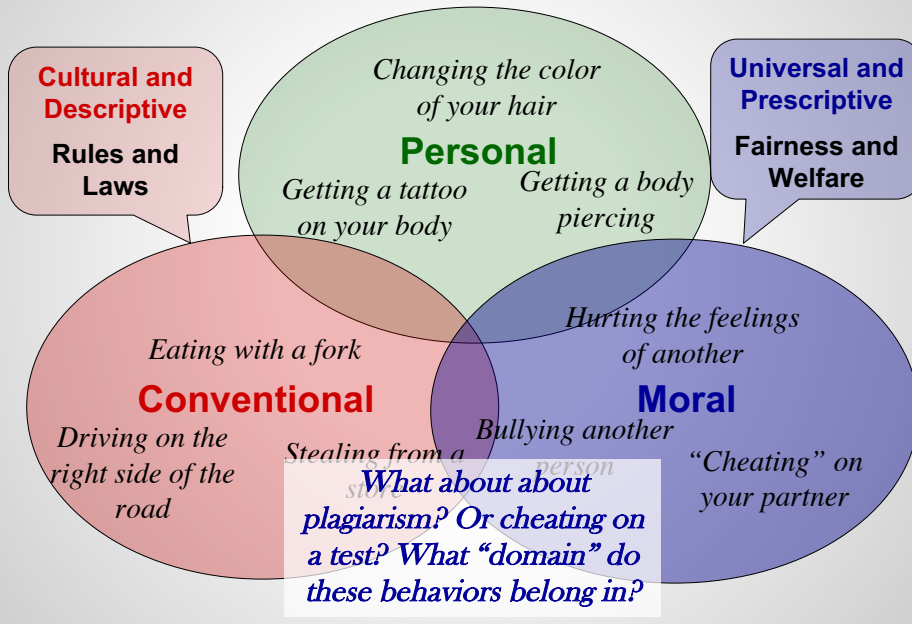
## Three Domains of Behavior

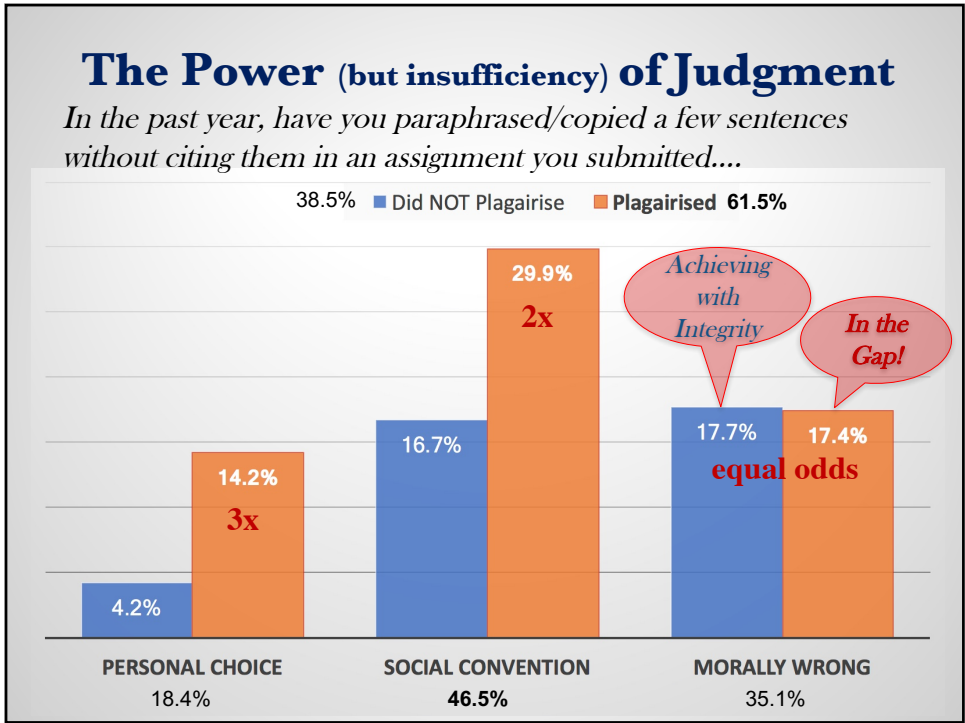
**Personal:** Individual decisions, preferences, and choices.

**Conventional:** Culturally-determined *descriptive* norms, rules, etc.

**Moral:** Universal *prescriptive* values, principles, and beliefs.

## How would you categorize these behaviors?





*Domain Judgment x Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism*

Domain Judgement	Variable	Paraphrased/copied a few sentences w/out citing		Total
		No	Yes	
Personal Choice	Observed	12	41	53
	Expected	20.4	32.6	53
	% of Total	4.2%	14.2%	18.4%
Social Convention	Observed	48	86	134
	Expected	51.6	82.4	134
	% of Total	16.7%	29.9%	46.5%
Moral Judgment	Observed	51	50	101
	Expected	38.9	62.1	101
	% of Total	17.7%	17.4%	35.1%
All	Count	111	177	288
	% of Total	38.5%	61.5%	100.0%

*Note . Bold-faced/italicised percentages indicate the observed count was significantly higher/lower than the expected count given marginal frequencies (adjusted residual values greater than 2.0 or less than -2.0, respectively). \* p < .05 \*\*p < .01.*

## Cheating as Unethical

**e-thi-kəl** 1: of or relating to ethics. 2: involving or expressing moral approval or disapproval. 3: conforming to accepted standards of conduct. (Merriam-Webster)

### Many Students Believe it's Wrong

- o 57% disapproved of cheating (Baird,1980)
- o 84% disagreed with the statement: "under some circumstances academic dishonesty is justified" (Jendrek, 1992)
- o Only 11% agreed that cheating is "sometimes justified" (Jordan, 2001)

### But Report Doing it Anyway

- o 21.3% of students who reported cheating also reported believing it was "unacceptable" (Anderman et al., 1998)
- o 40% of students who reported cheating also reported believing it was "morally wrong" (Stephens, 2004)

## The Thought/Action Problem

### An Operational Definition

*...the problem at once philosophical and psychological, of explicating the relationship between what a person says he ought to do, or even what he thinks he ought to do, and what he actually does.*

Locke, D. (1983). Theory and practice in thought and action. In H. Weinreich-Haste & D. Locke (Eds.), *Morality in the making: Thought, action, and the social context*. New York: Wiley.

## The Judgment-Action Gap

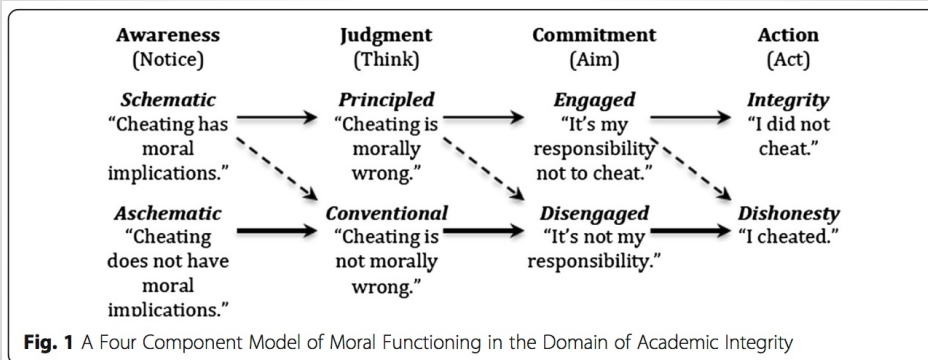
*I value morality but sometimes I fail to practice it.*

- 11th grade male believes cheating is morally wrong  
reports doing it anyway (Stephens, 2005)

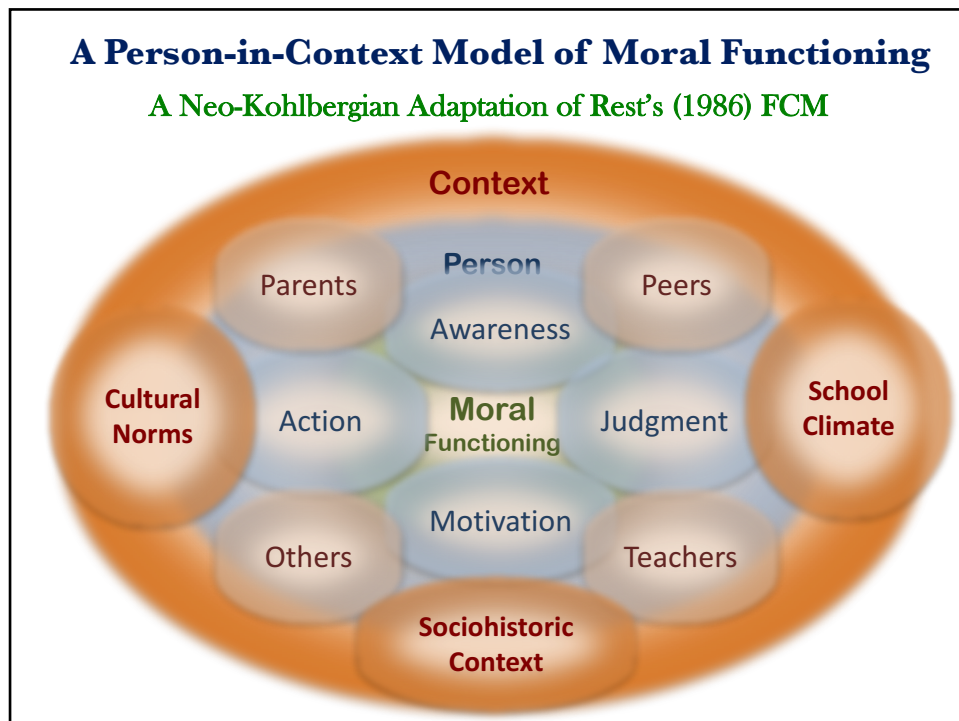
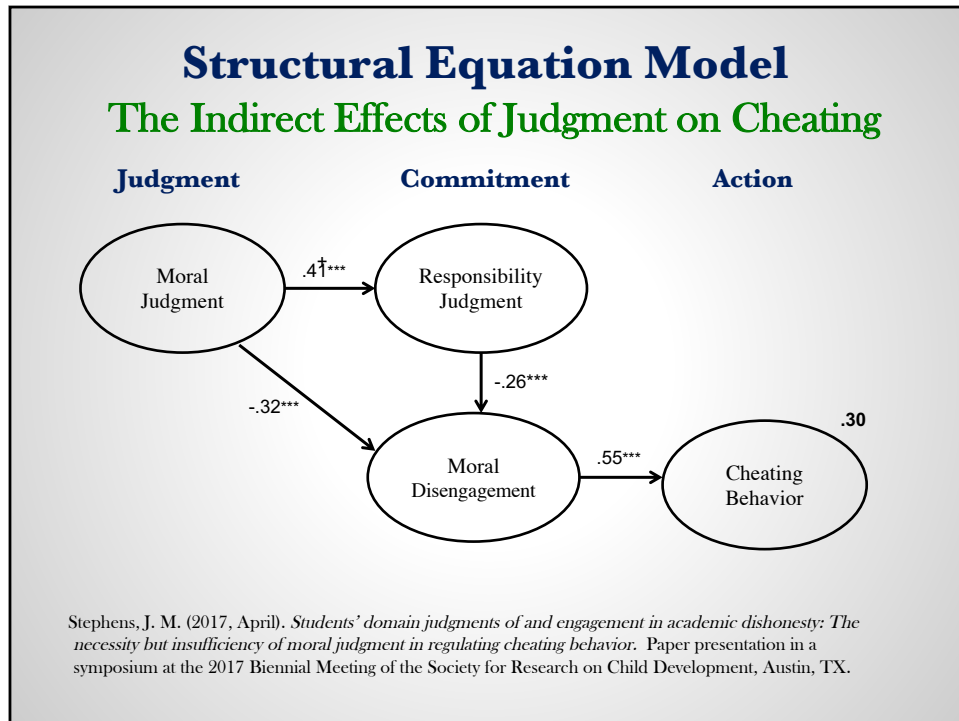


*Judgment is “necessary but insufficient”  
for moral action.*

## A Four Component Model (Rest, 1986) of Moral Functioning in the Domain of AI



Stephens, J. M., & Wangaard, D. B. (2016). The Achieving with Integrity Seminar: An integrative approach to promoting moral development in secondary school classrooms. *International Journal of Educational Integrity*, 12(3), 1-16. doi:10.1007/s40979-016-0010-1





## Conclusion: Four Suppositions

### Cheating as

**natural** and the

but so, too, is a sense of *justice* and *fairness*

**norm**, but

statistically speaking- most people do it

**unethical** and

it's deceitful, dishonest, and unfair

**avertible**

**15:30 Today**

culture and systems matter- think epigenetics

## Discussion and Concluding Thoughts

Your Questions?

*Comments...*

**Critiques!**

*Suggestions...*

More Questions?

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