Student Issue 02: Reactions to Cheating

- Cheating is bad. That’s a given.

- But reactions to cheating are complicated. In Case History 02 we’ll analyze reactions to cheating.

- Especially one universal reaction: while cheating is bad, no one wants to ‘tell’ on a cheater. So the question to consider in today’s class is: What are the good purposes served by this reaction?

The purpose of Case History 02 is to get your on thinking out in the open on a serious but surprisingly complicated issue.
Cheating

- http://www.testingoffice.msu.edu/cheating
- What do you think about Cheating?
- What do you think the school/company/society/should do about cheating?
- What do you think yourself should do when you saw someone cheating?

From graduate students who handled 19 Sep 12 class
Major answers both sections (anonymous):

Individual perspective

Group perspective

Cheaters perspective

Teaching aspects

University aspects
Major answers both sections:

- Individual perspective
- Group perspective
- Cheaters perspective
- Teaching aspects
- University aspects

Stakeholder analysis:

- Students
- Responsibility of faculty or administrators
Individual perspective:

- Destructive impact on another student will be serious
- Need for absolute certainty, which is rare
- The system for handling such a report is seriously flawed
- Consequences to the teller are serious
- Telling is a risk versus reward decision
  - Risk wins
  - Reward wins
- Empathy for circumstances that can produce cheating
- Respect for another’s decision, even a bad decision
Group perspective:

- Networking is important and telling breaches a network
- Mutual support
  - in times of need
  - as group loyalty
- Conflict between protecting the network versus individual inner guilt
- Group makes more accurate distinctions:
  - HW vs Exam cheating
  - Occasional versus chronic
  - For good reasons or for bad
- Individuals within the student group can deal one-on-one with a “cheater” better than the official system
  - Many felt an obligation: action?
Cheater’s perspective:

- A temporary cheater may have family, health, and/or financial issues that affect performance.
- A chronic cheater for all bad reasons will eventually implode.
Teaching aspects:

- HW copying:
  - Study group teaming is fine and not copying (VA concurs)
  - Occasional due to pressure is OK
  - Solution sets are all over and can be beneficial learning tools (VA concurs)
    - If a professor has problem with solution set availability, the professor has a responsibility not to contribute to it.
  - Chronic HW copying requires analysis:
    - Some problems take years to resolve: health, home, self confidence
    - Hard core: not good but still, person is “one of us”

- Very strong: Breakdown in student-teacher interaction:
  - Lack of clarity
  - Lack of consistency
  - Lack of any understanding for difficulties
  - Actions by professors on an entire class to prevent cheating focuses on punishment and is not conducive to learning

- How VA handled two cases:
  - Both local level (same as student reaction)
  - Two cleared. One guilty.

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University aspects:

- Very strong reaction:
  - The reporting/action system is seriously flawed
  - The burden on the witness is highly disproportionate
  - The punishment for the “cheater” often doesn’t fit the crime
  - The judges display serious lack of engagement

Surprise connection to Case history 01: the development of a parallel system: a strong student network ethos.