Effects of cheating behavior, disruptive behavior, and skepticism on academic perceptions, beliefs, and strategies: Understanding ethnic differences and predictive variables

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Abstract: The purpose of this quantitative study is to examine the relationships between students' skepticism of relevance of school on future success, cheating behavior, and disruptive behavior as determined by the PALS survey (Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey). This study will only use the selected variables for data analysis to determine if a relationship exists among the variables. Disruptive behavior and skepticism will serve as the independent variables and cheating behavior will be the dependent variable. This study will seek to determine if disruptive behavior and skepticism are predictive of cheating behaviors. Data will be segregated by ethnicity to further address the research questions.

Introduction

Overview

Concern with regard to cheating behavior and disruptive behavior has been the concern of scholarly research for many years (Daly, 2005). There is substantial concern that cheating behavior and disruptive behavior are becoming an epidemic behavior in American schools despite the fact that most schools have a written policy against academic dishonesty as well as written guidelines regarding appropriate and inappropriate school behavior. Unfortunately there is a gap in scholarly literature regarding the relationship between students' skepticism of school relevance, disruptive behavior, and cheating behavior. A gap also lies in identifying predictive variables of cheating behavior. This study will contribute to the scholarly understanding of the predictive relationship between skepticism of relevance and disruptive behavior on cheating behavior.

A scarcity of scholarly research has examined the connection between future orientation and student mastery versus student performance orientation. Students' perceptions of the relevance between current goals and future goals may affect their academic related perceptions, beliefs, strategies, and behaviors. This study will contribute to the scholarly understanding regarding the predictive abilities of skepticism and disruptive behavior on cheating behavior and examine differences that may exist among gender and ethnicity.

Problem Statement

There is currently insufficient scholarly research regarding predictive variables of cheating behaviors as well as predictive variables of cheating behaviors of students of different ethnicity. This study will add to the research and literature regarding this topic.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study will be to determine what relationship, if any, exist between skepticism of school relevance, disruptive behavior, and cheating behavior. If there is a relationship, then ethnicity will also be examined to determine the significance of correlation between disruptive behaviors and skepticism about the relevance of school for future success and cheating behavior.

The relationships between the students' skepticism, cheating behavior, and disruptive behavior as determined by the PALS survey (Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey) will be examined. The PALS instrument will be a self-administered questionnaire developed for this study, whose purpose will be to determine the cheating behaviors, disruptive behaviors, and skepticism about school relevance, while collecting the student's academic related perceptions, beliefs and strategies. The questionnaire attempts to elicit this information to enable effect of behaviors with academic perceptions.

Research Questions

It is the researcher's belief that educators want to minimize cheating behavior as well as disruptive behavior. In addition it is the researcher's belief that educators want to provide students with a relevant and thought provoking curriculum that will enable students for future success. These beliefs lead to formulating the questions that will guide the research:

1) Are skepticism of school relevance and disruptive behavior predictive of cheating behavior?
2) If skepticism of school relevance and disruptive behavior are predictive variables of cheating behavior, what differences exist among ethnic stratification?

Study background

Literature Review

Cheating behavior and academic dishonesty.

The simplest definition of cheating offered by Cizek (2003) is the act of being dishonest in order to achieve a desired goal. Academic cheating and dishonesty is simply any action that violates policies regarding any assigned work that would ultimately give a student an unfair advantage over another student (Cizek, 2003).

Although most research relating to cheating is centered upon college level students (Cizek, 2003) a limited amount of research regarding cheating behaviors prior to college does exist. Once students transition form elementary school to middle school and high school, students realize that the level of schooling is more rigorous and focused upon grades than in

elementary school (Anderman et al, 1998). According to Anderman et al (1998) as a result of external pressure and environment, students often resort to cheating behaviors.

Often students do not have an understanding of right and wrong in regard to academic dishonesty. Cheating and academic dishonesty is becoming a serious problem is American schools (McCabe, 1999). Most teachers, administrators, and parents are aware of students who engage in cheating behaviors. However, despite the efforts of educators and parents, cheating is becoming more predominant among student behavior.

Research is unclear about the role gender plays in cheating behavior. On one hand, research shows that gender plays a role in cheating behavior; males tend to have a greater inclination for cheating (Cizek, 2003). On the other hand McCabe (2001) argues that females have a stronger need to cheat in order to compete in historically male-dominated fields.

Disruptive behavior.

With the federal expectations for higher student achievement and accountability under *No Child Left Behind* coupled with disruptive student behavior, teachers face a myriad of challenges on a daily basis. Researchers like Canter (2003) and Marzano (2003) relate behavior in the classroom as a reflection of need. Meeting student needs is essential to limiting disruptive behavior.

Student disruptive behavior is not a new concern to the field of education. According to Daly (2005), "There's not a teacher alive who hasn't felt the frustration of trying to manage a classroom with at least one student who repeatedly pulls other students off-task with annoying, disorderly behavior" (p. 9). Student discipline and behavior issues plague American classrooms and the lack of adequate response to these behaviors has negatively impacted student achievement (Shupe, 1998).

The diversity that makes up U.S. public schools includes diversity in terms of race, culture, religion, as well as student behaviors. However, often times teachers are not prepared to meet the diverse needs of their students, including diversity in behavior. Time lost to discipline issues has inhibited improved student achievement. Lax discipline has taken its toll on public education (Public Agenda, 2004). Students who are disruptive reduce their chance of academic success as well as limit other students' learning experiences. In addition, teachers are ill prepared to deal with disruptive student behavior and are often driven out of the field of education (Canter, 2003).

Difficult students demonstrate a greater degree of defiant, disrespectful, and noncompliant behavior than their peers (Canter, 2003). Marzano (2003) identified five behaviors of difficult students: passivity, aggressiveness, attention issues, perfectionism, and social ineptness. Often times these behaviors are used as a means for disruptive students to communicate their needs (Daly, 2005).

Research clearly shows that disruptive behavior has negative impact on student's learning experiences and success. However, research does not explore the role gender plays on disruptive

student behavior nor does it examine the effect of disruptive behavior on academic-related perceptions, beliefs, and strategies.

Skepticism about the relevance of school on future success.

A pervasive and persistent problem facing educators is teaching students who are unmotivated to learn. According to Eccles & Wigfield (1995) being future oriented or perceiving a present task as important for future goals enhances student motivation and performance. Research has indicated that future time perspective is related to school performance (Murrel & Mingone, 1994; Nuttin, 1985). However, a dilemma facing many students is a lack of connection between curriculum and the relevance to their lives (Daniels & Arapotathis, 2005; Webb, 2000). Researchers Bingham & Stryker (2003) stated, "as much as we would like students to learn for the love of learning, most young people need the added incentive of seeing how the subject at hand relates to their place in the world" (p. 12). Although some students continue to learn and succeed despite making the connection, many students give up on the learning process and simply do enough to pass from one grade to the next, unfortunately some students resort to dropping-out of school altogether because they fail to see the connection between school and future success.

According to researchers, igniting a desire to learn in teens is the direct result of identifying or further developing an interest (Huitt, 2001; Schepps-Battle, 2002; Webb, 2000). In essence, knowing why one is learning something is essential for motivation. Webb (2000) stated, "some students can learn without knowing the reasons why. These students usually succeed in classroom learning environments. Others, however, need to know why they are learning before anything sticks" (p. 1).

Researchers Daniels & Arapostathis (2005) as well as Webb (2000) found that a lack of connection between what students are learning and the relevance it has to their lives and interest results in negative outcomes. Some of these outcomes include class failures, disruptive behavior, high absence rates, and dropping out.

Methodology

Population and Sample

Two schools will serve as the participating schools in this study. One school is located in south Texas and the other school is in west Texas. Both schools have been rated by the Texas Education Agency as at least an academically acceptable school. The schools selected place heavy emphasis on academics, have a diverse student body, and have diverse achievement levels.

The total populations of these schools range from 560 to 1955 students. 65.1 percent of the students will be of Mexican American or Mexican decent and 49.1 percent will be females. Participants were originally recruited for a study of the effect of the school environment on ability grouping of secondary students' personal achievement goal orientations.

Descriptive demographic statistics of student participants is provided in Table 8. A total of 548 students were selected for the identified subscales/variables. Anglo-American group

consisted of 210 participants, while Mexican-American accounted for 338 participants. Participants were separated by gender, grade-level, or any other factors.

Instrument and Scale Description

The instrument that will be used in this study will be the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS). PALS is a survey instrument designed to measure school motivation and learning goal orientation (Midgley et al., 2000). Scales are available for both students and teachers. Teacher scales measure teacher perceptions of the goal structure in the school, goal-related approaches to instruction, and personal teaching efficiency. The student scales assess personal achievement goal orientations, perceptions of teachers' goals, perceptions of the goal structures in the classroom, achievement-related beliefs, attitudes, and strategies, as well as perceptions of parents and home life. Student scales are measured using a five point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = "Not at all true," 3 = "Somewhat true," and 5= "Very true." For purposes of this study, only selected items from the student scales will be examined, they include: Cheating behavior, Disruptive behavior, and Skepticism about the relevance of school on future success.

Cheating behavior refers to students' use of cheating in class. Three items are used to measure this variable:

22. I sometimes copy answers from other students during tests.
31. I sometimes cheat on my class work.
39. I sometimes copy answers from other students when I do my class work.

Disruptive Behavior refers to students' engagement in behaviors that disrupt or disturb the classroom. Five items are used to measure this variable:

14. I sometimes annoy my teacher during class.
30. I sometimes get into trouble with my teacher during class.
34. I sometimes behave in a way during class that annoys my teacher.
50. I sometimes don't follow my teacher's directions during class.
54. I sometimes disturb the lesson that is going on in class.

Skepticism About the Relevance of School for Future Success refers to students' beliefs that doing well in school will not help them achieve success in the future. Six items are used to measure this variable:

4. Even if I do well in school, it will not help me have the kind of life I want when I grow up.
13. My chances of succeeding later in life don't depend on doing well in school.
28. Doing well in school doesn't improve my chances of having a good life when I grow up.
32. Getting good grades in school won't guarantee that I will get a good job when I grow up.
36. Even if I am successful in school, it won't help me fulfill my dreams.
43. Doing well in school won't help me have a satisfying career when I grow up.

The internal consistency reliability for each subscale was estimated using coefficient

alpha known as Cronbach's alpha. Values typically range from zero to one with higher values indicating greater internal consistency. The results for the subscales in this study are reported in Tables 1-6. In summary, cheating behavior showed good internal consistency at $\alpha = 0.812$, approximately 81% reliable (Table 1). All items were retained in this study. However, the item-total statistics (Table 2) indicate that internal consistency would increase if item p.22 was removed. Disruptive behavior also showed good internal consistency of $\alpha = 0.847$, approximately 85% reliable (Table 3). Disruptive behavior item-total statistics (Table 4) indicates that if p.50 was deleted internal consistency would increase, however all items were retained for this study. Finally, Skepticism of School Relevance reported good internal consistency at $\alpha = 0.807$, approximately 80.7% reliable (Table 5).

Procedures

The PALS scales were initially group administered to selected classrooms within a five day time period. All participants were reassured that the information they provided would remain confidential and anonymous. The data used in this study is secondary data and was provided by the original researcher/investigator who originally collected the data for a study of the effect of the school environment on ability grouping of secondary students' personal achievement goal orientations. SPSS 18 statistical software was used to create a database and analyze data.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistical methods for key demographic variables and selected key variables for each of the study groups. Quantitative analysis included using SPSS 18 statistical software to calculate ANOVA, Pearson Correlation, R square, and multiple regression analysis. All analysis techniques will be tested against a probability value of less than or equal to 0.05. Additionally reliability for each selected variable was tested prior to other statistical analysis.

The independent variables were disruptive behavior and skepticism and the dependent variable was cheating behavior. A linear regression test was calculated to determine if the independent variables were predictive of the dependent variables.

Results and Discussion

Findings

Correlation of Variables

The Pearson *r* correlation coefficient provides a test of the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between the variables. If the test produces results < 0.05, then the null hypothesis is rejected. However, if the test produces results > 0.05, then the null hypothesis is not rejected. Intercorrelation between the three selected subscales were determined and are reported in Table 7.

For correlation, the null hypothesis states that there is no relationship between the variables in the population, whereas the alternative hypothesis states that there is a relationship between the variables:

H_0: $\rho = 0$

H_1: $\rho \neq 0$

Table 7 reports that there is a significant positive relationship between cheating behavior, disruptive behavior, and skepticism of school relevance.

Multiple Linear Regression

After correlation was found using Pearson *r* correlation coefficient, multiple linear regression was used to predict scores on one cheating behavior using scores from disruptive behavior and skepticism of school relevance. Cheating behavior served as the dependent variable while disruptive behavior and skepticism of school relevance served as the independent or predictor variables.

There are separate null and alternative hypothesis for each predictor variable in multiple linear regression. The beta weight for each predictor is tested to see whether it is significantly different from zero. If the beta weight is significantly different from zero then the independent variable is a significant predictor of the dependent variable. The null hypothesis for each of the variables for this study is as follows:

$H_0: B_{Disruptive} = 0$

$H_0: B_{Skepticism} = 0$

The alternative hypothesis is as follows:

$H_1: B_{Disruptive} \neq 0$

$H_1: B_{Skepticism} \neq 0$

The multiple regression equation is created in the following form:

$\hat{Y} = B_0 + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2$

where Y = cheating behavior (predicted)

B_1 = disruptive behavior

B_2 = skepticism

To answer the proposed research question, "Are skepticism of school relevance and disruptive behavior predictive of cheating behavior?", multiple regression was conducted to predict cheating behavior from the variables disruptive behavior and skepticism of school relevance. Overall, the regression was significant (Table 8-9). R^2 shows 29.6% predictor of skepticism and disruptive behavior on cheating. ANOVA also shows significance.

To answer the proposed research question, "If skepticism of school relevance and disruptive behavior are predictive variables of cheating behavior, what differences exist among ethnic stratification?", the above data was segregated by ethnicity. Descriptive statistics of this segregation can be found in Table 8. Of the data reported, 210 participants reported ethnicity as Anglo-American and 338 participants reported their ethnicity as Mexican-American; this

separation is appropriate for data analysis. After segregating data by ethnicity, Tables 9-11, it is determined that there is significance in the relationship between the selected variables. Additionally data report that disruptive behavior and skepticism are significant predictors of cheating behavior for Anglo-American as well as Mexican-American. Further, R^2 square = 25.9% for Anglo-Americans and 33.1% Mexican-Americans. ANOVA is equivalent to the data prior to splitting the file. Furthermore, coefficients report that disruptive behavior was a significant predictor of cheating behavior for both ethnic groups. However, skepticism was not a significant predictor of cheating behavior for Anglo-Americans but was significant for Mexican-Americans.

Conclusions

Limitations

Limitations of this study include that data originated from a self-reporting instrument and previous research has indicated that selected self-responses are usually extreme or neutral rather than accurate reports. The internal reliability of the subscales was reported as good; increasing internal reliability would increase the validity of this study and analysis.

The data analysis for the selected variables disruptive behavior, skepticism of school relevance, and cheating behavior show significant correlation between variables. Furthermore, it is determined that disruptive behavior and skepticism are significant predictors of cheating behavior. It is determined that ethnicity is not a significant factor in this particular study because multiple regression, and other data analysis, results were similar prior to and after splitting the data by ethnicity. It is recommended that disruptive behavior and skepticism of school relevance be further studied and analyzed as predictors of cheating behavior.

Table 1: ***Cronbach's Alpha Measure of Reliability: Cheating Behavior***

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.812	.812	3

Table 2: ***Item-Total Statistics of Reliability: Cheating Behavior***

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
p22 I sometimes copy answers from other students during tests	5.07	5.111	.615	.392	.791
p31 I sometimes cheat on my class work.	4.90	4.657	.729	.534	.671
p39 I sometimes copy answers from other students when I do my class work	4.85	5.239	.646	.446	.758

Table 3: ***Cronbach's Alpha Measure of Reliability: Disruptive Behavior***

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.848	.847	5

Table 4: ***Item-Total Statistics of Reliability: Disruptive Behavior***

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
p14 I sometimes annoy my teacher during class.	9.18	17.954	.674	.494	.813
p30 I sometimes get into trouble with my teacher during class	9.20	17.420	.733	.546	.796
p34 I sometimes behave in a way during class that annoys my teacher.	9.39	18.221	.708	.527	.804
p50 I sometimes behave in a way during class that annoys my teacher.	9.10	20.556	.520	.290	.851
p54 I sometimes disturb the lesson that is going on in class.	9.40	18.765	.656	.436	.818

Table 5: ***Cronbach's Alpha Measure of Reliability: Skepticism of School Relevance***

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.806	.807	6

Table 6: ***Item-Total Statistics of Reliability: Skepticism of School Relevance***

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
p4 Even if I do well in school, it will not help me have the kind of life I want when I grow up.	10.16	22.020	.513	.289	.787
p13 my chances of succeeding later does not depend on doing well in school	10.22	22.493	.475	.245	.795
p28 Doing well in school does not improve my chances of having a good life when I grow up	10.25	20.844	.627	.396	.761
p32 Getting good grades in school will not guarantee that I will get a good job when I grow up	9.69	21.997	.493	.301	.792
p36 Even if I am successful in school, it will not help me fulfill my dreams	10.07	20.598	.645	.424	.757
p43 Doing well in school will not help me have a satisfying career when I grow up.	10.26	21.545	.642	.425	.760

Table 7: ***Correlation between Selected Variables***

Correlation Between Selected Variables				
		Cheating Behavior	Disruptive Behavior	Skepticism about relevance of school on future
Pearson Correlation	Cheating Behavior	1.000	.534	.321
	Disruptive Behavior	.534	1.000	.421
	Skepticism about relevance of school on future	.321	.421	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Cheating Behavior	.	.000	.000
	Disruptive Behavior	.000	.	.000
	Skepticism about relevance of school on future	.000	.000	.
N	Cheating Behavior	687	687	687
	Disruptive Behavior	687	687	687
	Skepticism about relevance of school on future	687	687	687

Table 8: ***Multiple Regression Descriptive Statistics: Separated by Ethnicity***

Descriptive Statistics

ethnicity		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Anglo-American	Cheating Behavior	7.41	3.062	210
	Disruptive Behavior	12.19	5.441	210
	Skepticism about relevance of school on future	11.50	5.077	210
Mexican-American	Cheating Behavior	7.29	3.195	338
	Disruptive Behavior	10.96	5.132	338
	Skepticism about relevance of school on future	11.84	5.354	338

Table 9: ***Multiple Regression ANOVA Statistics: Separated by Ethnicity***

ANOVA[b]

ethnicity	Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Anglo-American	**1**	**Regression**	**507.550**	**2**	**36.193**	**.000[a]**	**.000[a]**
		Residual	**1451.407**	**207**			
		Total	**1958.957**	**209**			
Mexican-American	**1**	**Regression**	**1138.073**	**2**	**82.827**	**.000[a]**	**.000[a]**
		Residual	**2301.513**	**335**			
		Total	**3439.586**	**337**			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Skepticism about relevance of school on future, Disruptive Behavior

b. Dependent Variable: Cheating Behavior

Table 10: ***Multiple Regression Correlation Statistics: Separated by Ethnicity***

Correlations

Ethnicity			Cheating Behavior	Disruptive Behavior	Skepticism about relevance of school
Anglo-American	Pearson Correlation	Cheating Behavior	.191	.504	.191
		Disruptive Behavior	.242	1.000	.242
		Skepticism about relevance of school on future	1.000	.242	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	Cheating Behavior	.003	.000	.003
		Disruptive Behavior	.000	.	.000
		Skepticism about relevance of school on future	.	.000	.
	N	Cheating Behavior	210	210	210
		Disruptive Behavior	210	210	210
		Skepticism about relevance of school on future	210	210	210
Mexican-American	Pearson Correlation	Cheating Behavior	.353	.564	.353
		Disruptive Behavior	.447	1.000	.447
		Skepticism about relevance of school on future	1.000	.447	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	Cheating Behavior	.000	.000	.000
		Disruptive Behavior	.000	.	.000
		Skepticism about relevance of school on future	.	.000	.
	N	Cheating Behavior	338	338	338
		Disruptive Behavior	338	338	338
		Skepticism about relevance of school on future	338	338	338

Table 11: ***Multiple Regression Coefficients Statistics: Separated by Ethnicity***

Coefficients[a]

ethnicity	Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
			B	Std. Error	Beta		
Anglo-American	1	(Constant)	3.572	.554	6.444	.000	.000
		Disruptive Behavior	.274	.035	7.887	.000	.000
		Skepticism about relevance of school on future	.044	.037	1.187	.237	.237
Mexican-American	1	(Constant)	2.934	.392	7.485	.000	.000
		Disruptive Behavior	.316	.031	10.160	.000	.000
		Skepticism about relevance of school on future	.075	.030	2.532	.012	.012

a. Dependent Variable: Cheating Behavior

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