



I Didn't Have Time! A Qualitative Exploration of Misbehaviors in Academic Contexts

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Abstract

Students display resistance, including academic dishonesty, at all educational levels. In the present study, we qualitatively examined the extent and incidence of academic misbehaviors by 101 US college students ($M_{\text{age}} = 22.98$ years, $SD = 6.70$). Using a combination of self-reported closed- and open-ended questions, we developed a multi-faceted understanding of how students perceived their own classroom misbehaviors to avoid work as being original, clever, deceptive, and unethical. Questions pertaining to possible prevention, impact on grade, and repetition of the misbehavior were also included. Further, environmental contributors of such behavior were explored, inclusive of the teacher, curriculum, larger school/institutional reasons, peers, and out-of-school issues. Thematic analyses identified distinct themes related to each factor, with poor time management emerging as a salient antecedent across factors. The present study also reviews and provides strategies to improve time management among students to mitigate future instances of academic misbehavior.

Keywords Academic dishonesty · Resistance · Cheating · Time management · Classroom management

Introduction

“Students in school cheat not to get the ‘A,’ but to avoid the ‘C.’” – *Charles Duhigg*¹

(Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist).

“Resistance is the opposition offered by one person to the orders, suggestions, or actions of another” (Caplin, 1969, p. 36). In academic contexts, such resistance can vary from

¹ *Brainy Quote—Charles Duhigg quotes*, n.d.

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mild misbehaviors like talking in class to more serious transgressions like plagiarizing in a dissertation. Although resistance to learning takes place at nearly every educational level, Caplin (1969) argues that with an increase in grade level, resistance becomes more sophisticated. In learning environments, past scholarship has primarily examined the construct of resistance through a qualitative or mixed-methods lens. For instance, early work by Burroughs et al. (1989) inductively derived a typology of students' resistant behaviors, inclusive of constructive (advising the teacher to improve) and destructive resistance (using deceptive tactics to make up grades). Subsequent qualitative work delved deeper into the use, motives, and methods of deception in college classrooms (Griffin et al., 2015), the anticipation and mitigation of student resistance (Parvaresh, 2019), as well as varying manifestations in primary school contexts as disruptive or micropolitical actions (Jacobs & Richardson, 2016; Spaulding, 2000).

The functions that resistant behavior may serve for students within larger academic contexts have also been explored; for instance, Högberg (2011) argued that students who engaged in dishonest academic behavior might be learning in ways that are outside the formal rules and norms of the institution. In a similar vein, other research illuminated teachers' assumptions of what constitutes knowledge and learning, with resistance being paradoxically valued if it signified independent problem-solving (Jacobs & Richardson, 2016). Griffin et al. (2015) found that the majority of students engaged in academically dishonest acts to secure a positive grade and to manage impressions to avoid an awkward situation. Student resistance could be used to affirm agency and empowerment or demand meaningful instruction, making this a deliberate act to express oneself and establish a more meaningful relationship with instructors (Kim, 2010).

Antecedents of Classroom Resistance

Research has also proposed motivational frameworks to explain student resistance in the form of cheating, highlighting individual and contextual factors such as parental/peer pressure for grades, teacher's pedagogical skill, grading standards, teacher surveillance, time pressure, number of peers who get away with dishonest acts, and fair testing practices among others (e.g., Davis et al., 1992; Jensen et al., 2002; Murdock & Anderman, 2006). The extent to which cheating was seen as an acceptable act also varied across contexts; students found such behavior acceptable when it was helping someone's family, and it was most acceptable when it involved helping a student avoid the risk of academic probation. In contrast, situations that involved cheating for the sake of a challenge and the ability to avoid being detected were the least acceptable motives (based on students' responses) for engaging in academically dishonest acts (Jensen et al., 2002). Gorham and Christophel (1992) identified motivating (like teacher effectiveness) and demotivating factors (like dissatisfaction with grades) in college classrooms; in general, a motivated state was attributed to students themselves whereas a demotivated state was perceived to be the instructor's problem.

Past qualitative work on situational contributors of student resistance has broadly identified teacher-related factors, perceived relevance of the curriculum, sociocultural impacts, effects of the school environment (including peers), larger institutional policies, as well as non-academic concerns (e.g., Burroughs, 2007; Garber, 2001; Kuntz & Butler, 2014; McCabe & Trevino, 1997; McFarland, 2001). In addition, a range of dispositional factors such as higher levels of psychopathy, lower levels of conscientiousness and agreeableness, lack of self-control, attitudes towards cheating, deception, and the tendency to be creative

have been associated with academic dishonesty (Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015; Kapoor & Kaufman, 2020; Vedel, 2014; Williams et al., 2010; Yu et al., 2017). Although resisting classwork may arise from oppositionality and dissatisfaction with existing systems, getting away with it can require creative thinking (Kapoor, 2019). Some theoretical and empirical research has applied the concept of negative creativity (James et al., 1999) to learning environments, where students may engage in original and clever academic misbehaviors to resist norms or avoid work (Kapoor, 2019; Kapoor & Kaufman, 2020; Meshkova & Enikolopov, 2017). Such resistance likely also involves the use of deception (Griffin et al., 2015; Kapoor & Kaufman, 2020), a tendency that is associated with being negatively creative as well (Kapoor & Khan, 2017).

The Present Study

A thorough understanding of resistance inevitably requires an interdisciplinary approach as its antecedents comprise many and diverse concerns (Caplin, 1969). Moreover, there is a call to examine macro-contextual factors contributing to resistant behaviors, including larger relations between effort, achievement, and advancement in society (Murdock & Anderman, 2006). Against this background, the present study aims to qualitatively examine the extent and instances of academic misbehaviors as self-reported by US college students. This was part of a larger mixed-methods project examining resistance in learning contexts (see also Kapoor & Kaufman, 2020). Thus, the current study had four primary objectives:

- (a) To gain a qualitative understanding of original misbehavior in academic contexts to avoid classwork;
- (b) To triangulate this understanding with self-perceptions of academic misbehaviors as original and deceptive;
- (c) To thematically analyze the environmental factors contributing to such misbehavior, inclusive of the teacher, the curriculum, larger school/institutional reasons, peers, and out-of-school factors; and
- (d) To provide suggestions that may mitigate against resorting to misbehavior as a means of coping with academic pressures.

In line with past research examining what, if any, factors may have prevented students from cheating (Beasley, 2014), items pertaining to possible prevention, impact on grade, as well as repeating the misbehavior were also included. Using a combination of self-report closed- and open-ended questions, we developed a multi-faceted understanding of how students view their own classroom misbehaviors to avoid work as well as factors contributing to such behavior.

Method

Participants

A total of 101 participants ($M_{\text{age}}=22.98$ years, $SD=6.70$, range: 18–53) were recruited from a university campus in the Northeastern United States through in-class survey administration

and online recruitment. The demographic distribution of the sample was 34 males and 63 females (the remainder preferred not to say or did not answer); 71.4% self-identified as White or Caucasian, 7.6% as Asian or Asian American, 5.7% as Hispanic or Hispanic American or Latinx, 4.8% as multiracial, and 2.9% as Black or African American, with the remainder preferring not to say); 21.9% reported Civil Engineering as their academic major, 19% majored in Animal Science, and the remainder reported 38 other distinct majors; the average GPA of the sample was 3.57 ($SD=0.39$). Anonymized data were collected via Qualtrics and participants responded to the survey on their personal electronic devices in a voluntary manner. The study received Institutional Review Board exemption by the University of Connecticut (#X019-076).

Measures

Classroom Behavior

Participants were instructed to write down “the most memorable act” they have ever done to avoid work in class. They were requested to include in this anecdote details such as their grade at the time, the subject/assignment/task, whether they liked the teacher, the class, and the general subject area, as well as whether they acted alone or with a friend(s). Thereafter, participants rated the extent to which they agreed that the act they described was original/different, clever, deceptive, and ethical (1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*); these are referred to as “self-ratings” henceforth. They also indicated their agreement with six statements describing how much they liked the subject, the class, the teacher, and their peers at the time of the incident described. Cronbach’s alpha for the cumulative score for the six statements was 0.84, indicating adequate internal consistency to sum the individual items into one score of “Liking.”

Prevention. Participants were asked to describe any factors that may have prevented them from engaging in the act (see also Beasley, 2014).

Grade. They were also asked to indicate whether they received a better grade in the class as a result of acting in the manner they described as compared to when they did not act in that way.

Repetition. Last, they described whether the same or different action was repeated in subsequent grades.

Environmental Factors

Participants responded to five questions pertaining to the influence of different environmental factors on their behaviors to avoid work along a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all* to 6 = *a great deal*). These included the extent to which the teacher, the curriculum, larger school/institutional reasons, peers, and out-of-school issues prompted the participant’s behavior(s). Further, for each factor, participants could choose to qualitatively elaborate on their rating.

Results

Perceptions of Resistance

Only four participants did not report an anecdote of how they avoided class work. For the rest, participants’ self-ratings of their “most memorable act” anecdote as original/different,

clever, deceptive, and ethical (1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*) were compared with external ratings. Three independent raters ($M_{\text{age}} = 26.67$ years) assessed all anecdotes on the same variables with adequate inter-rater reliabilities. ICCs (2,3) for original/different, clever, deceptive, and ethical ratings were 0.77, 0.72, 0.77, and 0.69, respectively. Therefore, ratings were averaged across raters for each anecdote and are referred to as "other-ratings" henceforth. Correlations between self- and other-ratings across the variables indicated high self-insight; original/different: $r = 0.42$, clever: $r = 0.37$, deceptive: $r = 0.53$, and ethical: $r = 0.43$, $ps < 0.001$. Further, paired t-tests between self- and other-ratings were non-significant for all other pairs, $ts = -0.88$ to 1.48 , $ps = 0.14$ to 0.41 , ns. When participants considered an anecdote to be original, it was associated with being cleverer ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$) and more ethical ($r = 0.21$, $p = 0.04$). On the other hand, when raters considered anecdotes to be original, they were associated with being more deceptive ($r = 0.59$, $p < 0.001$) and less ethical ($r = -0.40$, $p < 0.001$). Yet, both participants and raters associated more deceptive anecdotes to be more unethical ($rs = -0.43$ to -0.74 , $ps < 0.001$). Further, liking the subject/class/teacher had no relationship with whether they repeated the action in later grades or if they received a better grade because of acting in that manner ($rs = -0.08$ to 0.04 , $ps > 0.05$, ns).

For the qualitative analyses, a directed content analysis was conducted in which all responses were coded separately by two individual researchers using NVivo 12. Given that several theories exist to understand academic dishonesty, a directed content analysis method was used, which provides researchers the scope to build on existing theory. This method involves analyzing the data with predetermined codes. The data that could not be coded were identified and analyzed to determine if they form a new category or subcategory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A few examples of anecdotes that were broadly original, clever, unethical, and deceptive were:

1. *It was senior year, and I got out of writing a paper. I broke my fingers, and said I couldn't type it up, and when that was not enough I explained I was on pain medication at home to help deal with it and anything I wrote would be less than representative of my best work.*
2. *I have dyscalculia (undiagnosed at the time) and I was terrified of doing math problems on the board. In grade 4 (I think) we were learning long division. The teacher wrote 3 problems on the board and 3 students would be called on to come up and solve them in front of the class. The previous time we did this, I took longer to finish than everyone else and I was also unsurprisingly wrong. It was so embarrassing and I was really conscious of how bad I was at math especially because I was a good student otherwise. I was dreading this activity all day before math class and not wanting to go through that again. Before math we had recess. It was snowy and icy outside. I made some snowballs and brought them back into the classroom inside my jacket and started throwing them... that got me sent out of class really fast...*
3. *I once passed in the wrong assignment on purpose (a previous assignment) and finished it by the time my teacher was passing the assignments back to everyone. When she got to me she said "I think you gave me the wrong assignment," and with the most confused face I could put on I said "oh I'm so sorry!" and proceeded to give her the proper assignment with no score reduction.*
4. *In fifth grade I really didn't want to go to school so I took leftover Mac & cheese, made it look like throw up, and threw it up to get out of going.*

The differences in the length and details in the responses indicated that some participants described the anecdotes in a before-during-after narrative, justifying the reasons for why they engaged in the action to avoid class work, as opposed to others without an elaborate justification.

Prevention

Participants were asked to describe any factors that may have prevented them from engaging in the act (Table 1). The responses were categorized into six themes: (a) Time management: participants mentioned that managing their time appropriately would have prevented them from engaging in the act. (b) Peer-related factors: these comprised aspects that would have prevented them from engaging in the act. (c) Curriculum-related: these responses included the design of the course or the activities in the classroom that may have prevented them from engaging in the act. (d) Teacher-related: these included responses about the quality of teaching, the nature of the teacher or the instructor in the classroom, the emphasis on learning in the classroom, and consequences that might have prevented them from engaging in the act. (e) Personal reasons: these included responses associated with the participant's mental health, confidence levels, family-related issues, including their attention levels in a classroom that prevented them from engaging in the act, and (f) No reason: some participants also mentioned that there was no clear reason that would have prevented them from engaging in the act.

Grade

They were also asked to indicate whether they believed they received a better grade in the class as a result of acting in the manner they described (Table 2). The responses were categorized into three themes: (a) Some effect on grade: this included responses that mentioned that the act did affect their grades and responses that also mentioned that they got a better grade due to the act, whereas others mentioned that the act lowered their grade. (b) No effect on grade: these included responses that mentioned that the act did not affect their grade. (c) Not applicable: these included responses where the act and its effect on the grade were not applicable or the respondent did not engage in the act.

Repetition

Last, participants described whether the same or different action was repeated in subsequent classes (Table 3). The responses were categorized into four themes: (a) Yes: these included responses from participants that mentioned that they repeated the same act during the course of the same year, as well as responses that mentioned that they repeated the same act several times in the same year and over the course of following years as well. (b) No: these included responses that mentioned that they did not repeat this act after first time. (c) Maybe: these included responses that mentioned that they might have repeated the act again, although they were not entirely sure if they did. (d) Different Act: these included responses that mentioned that they did not repeat the same act but had tried a variation of it during a different time.

Environmental Factors

When elaborating on the reasons for whether and to what extent environmental factors influenced their classroom resistance, numerous themes emerged. This included the extent to which the teacher, the curriculum, larger school/institutional reasons, peers, or out-of-school issues prompted the participant's behavior(s).

Teacher-Related Factors

Participants' responses related to the teacher fell under three categories: (a) Quality of teaching: this included responses that described the type of teaching (example: *'boring'*, *'barely instructed'*, *'extremely strict'* etc.) and the nature of the teacher or the instructor in the classroom (example: *'confusing'*, *'didn't really show up'* etc.) that affected the participants behavior. (b) Low emphasis on learning: the participants reported that the teacher/instructor did not emphasize learning in the classroom, which in turn affected their behavior. (c) Low or no sanction by the instructor: some participants reported that little to no sanction was provided as a consequence of their behavior, this in turn affected their behavior (Table 4).

Curriculum-Related Factors

Responses from participants related to curriculum-related factors that affected their behavior fell under four categories: (a) Curriculum itself: these included responses that described the curriculum as challenging, easy, and confusion regarding curriculum, etc. (b) Consequences (if any): curriculum-related consequences that affected behavior. (c) Disinterest in the curriculum: these included responses that described a lack of interest in the curriculum and boredom that affected their behavior, and (d) Grading system: participants reported the grading system (which was a part of the curriculum) as a factor that affected their behavior (Table 5).

School or Institutional Factors

Participants reported that their schools/institutions affected their behavior in three ways: (a) Competitive environment: participants reported that a competitive environment in the school or institution pressured the participants to perform well academically, which in turn affected their behavior. (b) Systemic issues: these included rules of an institution, generational differences, burden of homework, use of technology in classrooms reported by the participants that affected their behavior. (c) Time management factors: these included not being able to manage time with respect to school assignments and classes (Table 6; time management was a common response that was related to both school/institutional and out-of-school factors).

Peer Group Related Factors

Participants' responses to peer norms as a factor that affected their behavior fell under three categories: (a) Group peer norms: these included responses from participants who were a

member/part of the peer group; these responses demonstrated an equal relationship to the peer group. (b) Peer pressure: responses that demonstrated participants getting carried away due to peer pressure, which represented a hierarchical relationship to the peer group, and a fear of moving outside the peer group affected their behavior, and (c) Negative attitude towards peers: these responses demonstrated an animosity towards the peer group, and students did not see themselves as part of the peer group, which affected their behavior (Table 7).

Out-of-School Factors

Out-of-school factors included participants' romantic relationships, their mental health, family-related factors that affected their behavior(s), and time-management with respect to factors outside of school (Table 8).

Discussion

This study aimed to qualitatively examine the extent and instances of academic dishonesty as self-reported by US college students. In addition to self-perceptions of such resistance, participants described environmental antecedents of this behavior. Students considered their original academic misbehaviors to be cleverer and more ethical, whereas raters were likely to consider them as being more deceptive and less ethical. This contrast in the ethics associated with novel misbehaviors highlights the ease with which creative individuals may justify their unethical behavior (e.g., Mai et al., 2015), thereby misperceiving it as objectively ethical if it helped them meet their goals. However, participants and raters arrived at a consensus when judging more deceptive anecdotes to also be more unethical.

Factors associated with their teachers and instructors were the most common when enlisting what would have prevented participants from engaging in the act. These included responses on the quality of teaching, the nature of the teacher, and the emphasis provided on learning in the classroom (*"What would have prevented me from doing the act was if the teacher wasn't grading the packet or if she didn't give us so much work to do over a break in the first place."*) A lighter curriculum-load as well as better time management skills may have prevented resistant acts as well. When asked about the grade received in class as a result of their academic misbehavior, the majority of participants noted that it did not affect their grade at all. Moreover, the majority of participants claimed to have not repeated the misbehavior in the same year or even in subsequent years (*"Never. I resent those that do in my classes as it hurts the perception of those who do not cheat."*).

In terms of contextual antecedents, quality of teaching was a prominent theme that emerged, comprising responses that described the dominant teaching style as 'boring,' 'extremely strict,' and 'barely instructed,' and the nature of the teacher in the classroom as 'creative,' and 'confusing,' among others. From among 101 participants, 46 provided responses that fell under this category, highlighting the importance of the teachers' attitude and style of instruction in a classroom. Similarly, Beasley (2014) found that students blamed their teachers/instructors for ignoring them, not paying enough attention to academic dishonesty, and not being engaging enough. Garber (2001), during interviews with

students, found that teachers' personalities were widely discussed. Students mentioned that they do not want a teacher that will let them 'get away with stuff' or 'slack off,' however, students reported that they did not like teachers who were too strict either and who emphasized discipline rather than learning. Students were very critical of teachers who did not have control over their class and were unable to deal with student behavior. This was reflected in the present study as well: "*If the teacher was more strict, I would probably avoid this behavior in that class*" [sic]. Students also preferred teachers who were engaging and challenged them to do better in class.

The grading system and pressure to secure good grades was a sub-theme under the curriculum-related antecedents, which influenced participants' misbehavior ("*Because the education system focuses on the grade, not the material. They wont let you go after majors that you want without a certain GPA, struggling isn't okay. You gotta be excellent so if it takes you a little longer to process something you're already at a disadvantage.*" [sic]). This is in line with past work by Griffin et al. (2015), who found that 82% of students' reasons for academic dishonesty were due to the concern of securing a positive grade. Additionally, students may face higher stress and time restrictions or pressure to do well due to the institution's grading system (Högberg, 2011).

Pino and Smith (2003) in their work on academic dishonesty among college students found that participating in student clubs or groups in general increased one's probability of academic dishonesty. They also found that the longer one is part of the college student culture, the higher their probability of engaging in academic dishonesty. Similarly, McCabe and Trevino (1997) found that student's academic dishonesty was lower when they perceived that such misconduct would be disapproved of by their peers but was more when they perceived higher levels of cheating among their peers. They argued that given the high influence of peer approval and peer disapproval, Social Learning Theory (SLT) may provide a useful framework for understanding academic dishonesty. SLT suggests that human behavior is based on observing others in a given environment, specifically on the approval or disapproval of others in the environment. As noted in the present study as well, peers had a large influence on whether participants engaged in academic misbehaviors.

In another study, McCabe and Trevino (1993) found a positive association with academic dishonesty and perceptions of peer's academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty was negatively associated with understanding integrity policies of the institute and the certainty of being reported. They also found that the perception of peer behavior was the most influential contextual variable, adding that peer behavior might not only influence acts of academic dishonesty but might provide support for these acts. This finding was echoed in the present study, as peers featured in the preventive factors ("*I think that if our peer pressure/masculine norm climate wasn't so strong then I wouldn't have followed the crowd into boys club.*") and as well as an environmental antecedent ("*Everyone In the class used their phones.*" and "*I compared myself to peers, but overall I feel it was me self-sabotaging myself.*").

Considering Murdock and Anderman's (2006) call for further research that examines the macro-contextual factors affecting academic dishonesty, this study highlighted features of the larger system of competitiveness that drives academic dishonesty. A subtheme under the school/institutional environmental factor emphasized the competitive environment within schools ("*I think that there is a major push for perfectionism in college. I feel that if I don't perform, I will end up in a homeless shelter. The environment of the pre-graduate school persona is very toxic and degrading to the ability of people if they were encouraged to work together. While this class wasn't necessarily terribly challenging, it makes students question the ability as an academic if they get an A-.*") [sic]. This example highlights the need for

educators to examine the relationship between academic achievement and the environment of competition within classrooms closely and see this relationship as influencing academically dishonest acts among students. Similarly, students in the study by Beasley (2014) condemned the competitive environment of the university system that placed unrealistic expectations and unnecessary strain on them to perform well.

Time to Make the Time

An over-arching theme constituted participants' dissatisfaction with how they were managing and allocating their time. About 20% of participants mentioned that managing their time well would have prevented them from engaging in academic misbehavior. Similarly, time management was a sub-theme under the school/institutional factor (*"My work load was intense when I first started my major."*) and under the out-of-school factor (*"My parents are currently getting a divorce, and there are certainly family problems, but being that I don't live at home, these aren't a daily distraction. Rather, this mostly boils down to whether or not I have time outside of lecture. If I didn't, I would probably try to learn more in class, rather than taking the time to teach myself in my free time."*). In a similar vein, Beasley (2014) found that time management to be a salient factor that could have prevented students from cheating. Some mentioned not having enough time to complete a task, and others mentioned that they could have done a better job at managing their time. This included better planning and minimizing the tendency to procrastinate.

Pozdeeva (2019), in an extensive literature review, examined various definitions of time-management. These included time management as a technique to deal with stress, which tied into perceived control over time that results in time management behaviors such as defining goals, scheduling, and setting priorities. The results of better time management included lower stress, higher productivity, and study effectiveness that enhanced academic success. Another definition included the concept of procrastination, which is a crucial part of poor time management skills. In this vein, the importance of the teacher's help in improving students' time management skills and thereby managing stress was highlighted, particularly in higher educational contexts. Higher perceived control over one's time was also associated with reduced stress as well as better academic performance (Nonis, 1997).

Kearns and Gardiner (2007) took a multidimensional approach to studying time management. Different time management behaviors and perceived effectiveness were studied among 269 staff and students, including having a clear purpose in your career, planning and prioritizing, avoiding interruptions and distractions, and being organized. The authors proposed a model based on their findings, with having a clear goal and purpose being the most important time management behavior, followed by planning and prioritizing, avoiding distractions, and being organized. They suggest that the most important aspect of time management is to be aware of long term goals and aspirations. Specifically, the individual must reflect on what they are trying to achieve, and this process drives the person's academic effectiveness and wellbeing. For students, they need to be clear about the purpose of what they are studying, while identifying high priority areas.

Given the prominence of time management, we suggest that educators focus on reducing the time burden placed on students within the classroom (*"It was an 80-page research paper. I mean we all want more time"*). Similarly, time commitments outside the classroom influence students' academic performance (*"I had just started my first job and was very overwhelmed with my schoolwork and extra curriculums."*); it would do well for instructors

to have more realistic expectations about the quantum of work that can be completed in a given period of time, accounting for other responsibilities that students may have. Strategies for better time management (Nonis, 1997) include setting up exams, assignments and projects at regular intervals rather than conducting a few major exams; this signals to the students that they have control over their time and not the opposite. Second, instructors can provide a syllabus that contains a time schedule with due dates, examination dates, and topics to be studied, enabling students to plan and manage their time. Third, students can be made aware of perceptions of time management that could influence their level of stress and academic performance. Focus group studies to assess students' strengths and weaknesses can be conducted regularly to avoid academic stress.

We suggest that effective time management training sessions can be conducted for students in universities. Häfner et al. (2015) examined students at a university who underwent time management training sessions for four weeks; the training resulted in lower perceived stress and greater perceived control over time, with no changes in academic demands. Similar time management training programs can be designed for and implemented with students at all academic levels; the incidence of academic misbehaviors before and after the training can be documented to assess efficacy of the intervention.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this investigation was one of the first to examine the originality of academic misbehaviors, some limitations need to be acknowledged. First, the data were collected from a WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) sample of students in the US; cheating and academic dishonesty is likely to be manifested differently across cultures and future research can replicate this design among diverse samples (Rawwas et al., 2004). Second, although self-perceptions of the misbehaviors were accounted for, other dispositional variables such as personality were not included. Third, the interaction between the various environmental factors was not focused on; future studies can explore interlinkages among these contributors to student resistance. Similarly, research can also examine more serious cases of academic misconduct and examine whether patterns of misbehavior emerge across grades. Another limitation was the methodology used in this study; directed content analysis relies on previous theory in the field, which is an informed approach but also presents a strong bias (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Future research could adopt different methodologies to similar studies to advance theory-building and evidence generation in this field. Last, about 63% of the qualitative data were available for thematic analyses (the remaining responses were missing or not applicable); efforts can be made to increase the completion rate in future work, perhaps by incentivizing participation.

In sum, the present study identified antecedents of recalled classroom misbehaviors to avoid work. In addition to the established contributors of teacher-, peer-, and curriculum-related influences, a lack of time management emerged as an encompassing antecedent. Educationists and school officials could offer explicit instruction and techniques in managing time better, which may positively affect student engagement in classrooms.

Table 1 Preventive factors that might have affected participant's behavior(s)

	<i>n</i>
(a) Time Management	10
"If I had developed better working habits at that point then I would've probably done the assignment on time."	
"I just needed to plan ahead. I tend to due things last minute, so I tend to forget about some assignments." [sic]	
(b) Peer-related	3
"I think that if our peer pressure/masculine norm climate wasn't so strong then I wouldn't have followed the crowd into boys club."	
(c) Curriculum-related	22
"If there was less pointless worksheets or activities then I would have left class less often. I think we should have instead focused our time on learning and doing activities and worked that actually supplemented our learning and kept us engaged."	
"If the class didn't waste time on busy work and useless lectures that contributed nothing to the course-work."	
"If the class was more collaborative and had more hands on work."	
(d) Teacher-related	33
"What would have prevented me from doing the act was if the teacher wasn't grading the packet or if she didn't give us so much work to do over a break in the first place."	
"If the teacher did actual work and didn't just sit at her desk I would've gone to class more often."	
"If the teacher would have just let me leave the study hall and go upstairs I wouldn't have had to formulate a plan with my cousin that I was going to be organizing books in her classroom. The teacher was extremely old and grouchy. The school did not like her either but since she was close to retirement they couldn't get rid of her." [sic]	
"The professor could have assigned readings or some sort of secondary material to provide background for his teachings, rather than rambling in class about how a certain formula might be useful if we go into one, specific field. When professors are organized, I feel that students tend to be more engaged. If a professor truly understands a subject, he/she should be able to explain that to his students in no uncertain terms. Being an engaging professor is difficult, but putting in the time and effort to lesson plan is something that should be expected from every hire." [sic]	
(e) Personal reasons	23
"I just needed to be more "checked in" at the time. This event was during a long lab class, and the written assignment was long and I was just tired. Next time I need to pay more attention so that I can understand the whole assignment."	
"Looking back, I struggled with anxiety and possibly depression, which made me struggle with completing my work on time and made me struggle with answering questions/giving presentations in front of other people. I wish my elementary and middle schools had made an effort to teach us about our mental health and when/how to seek help."	
"What could've prevented me from engaging in this act was in I had more confidence in my abilities to do math coursework and I stopped comparing myself to all of my classmates around me."	
(f) No reason	7
"Can't think of anything."	

Three responses were either not applicable or missing

Table 2 How the act affected the participant's grade

	<i>n</i>
(a) Some effect on grade	31
"I've done well on the assignments, and I understand the material better than I did during the class, itself. I've also attended the professor's office hours, which provides a more personal experience, such that I understand exactly what should have been covered."	
"It did, because if I was not deceptive in how I went about presenting my final project I would have got a lower grade due to no extra credit and being much more on edge in front of a whole class rather than the 1-on-1 session I received."	
"No, it brought my grade down a little bit."	
(b) No effect on grade	62
"Missing that day didn't affect my grade at all. "	
"It didn't hurt me or help me. Either way I would have done the work it was just a matter of if I was going to do it in class and then twiddle my thumbs for the rest of class or not."	
"It didn't really have a large effect on my grade. I always ended up getting the work done just not in class."	
"Probably wouldn't have made a difference because the assignments were easy and I did well whether I copied off someone else or did it on my own"	
(c) Not applicable	5
"There was no grade in the class because it was a study hall, but acting in this manner made me a lot happier."	

Three responses were either not applicable or missing

Table 3 Repetition of the academic misbehavior

	<i>n</i>
(a) Yes	36
"Yes, same school year"	
"Yes I did this throughout high school."	
"Yes, senior year and freshman year of college."	
"yes I have continuously avoided assignments by cleaning and being tidy as it is helpful to keep my house clean but also I could do my assignments first and then clean. I've done this sophomore, junior, and senior year. Not as a freshman as I was not living alone at that time."	
(b) No	47
"No not really, sharing homework assignments with friends is the closest I've come but in those cases we split up the work instead of outright not doing it or stealing an answer key."	
"No. In general I am a good student and a bit paranoid so I usually go to all classes and do all work."	
"No, I never skipped class again- that class, or any other in middle or high school."	
"Well besides what I shared with you before, nothing else. I really only was avoiding her work my junior and senior year. (She was the only teacher who taught the higher level Spanish classes so I had to take her junior year, too). It was more pronounced my senior year which is why I chose to pick that year in specific. But I didn't do anything like this in my other classes- not even my math classes which I had difficulty in! I like learning. The Spanish class was just awful."	
(c) Maybe	5
"I'm not entirely sure but I probably did freshmen to senior year of high school"	
(d) Different Act	8
"Not the same. I had other times that I just missed class or have an even worse excuse."	

Five responses were either not applicable or missing

Table 4 Teacher-related factors contributing to the participants behavior(s)

	<i>n</i>
(a) Quality of Teaching	46
“The teacher didn’t really teach the subject. The class mostly read the textbook and then did problems from it.”	
“professor was boring, didn’t care about their own subject they were teaching, didn’t want to relate to students”	
“The teacher made me truly angry. I was upset to see how little someone cared about their students enjoying/engaging with the topic at hand.”	
“All institutions are going to hire professors who march to the beat of their own drum, but this can be mitigated by routine evaluation, followed by action. This is the key—this professor has had a string of negative evaluations, based on information found online, but he was the only one available for this particular course. The school has been negligent in allowing him to continue in this way, and it would be wise to readdress his teaching style.”	
“I loved the professor.”	
“Teacher was confusing”	
“Professor wouldn’t make class content relate to exam content enough”	
(b) Low emphasis on Learning	4
“It did in the sense that it knew about this teacher’s reputation and condoned her work. It was seen as a right of passage to get through her class and often the emphasis was on “getting through” and not necessarily learning.” [sic]	
(c) Low or No Sanction by the Instructor	10
“Teacher was lax, did not follow up on my attendance”	
“The teacher didn’t care if we used our phones in class.”	
“If the teacher was more strict, I would probably avoid this behavior in that class.”	

Forty-one responses were either not applicable or missing

Table 5 Curriculum-related factors contributing to the participants behavior(s)

	<i>n</i>
(a) Curriculum itself	32
“The curriculum was relatively easy so we didn’t usually have many questions and it didn’t take us long to do the work so we didn’t feel we needed to work on it during class because we could finish it easily on our own later.”	
“The way the subject was taught was difficult. I have no doubt that I could get it if it was taught differently, but my teachers way of explaining things was so confusing.”	
“There was no real curriculum—the professor took tangents regularly, and generally speaking, he taught what he wanted to teach. I’m sure that this will be useful someday, but I’m having a hard time piecing it together in the present.”	
(b) Consequences (if any)	1
“It was an easy class I felt comfortable missing.”	
(c) Disinterest in Curriculum	17
“We were only doing a warm up question at the time which was therefore easy and boring for me to answer and when my teacher saw this she didn’t ask me to put my phone away.”	
“I was not motivated to pay attention at school I preferred independence most of the time. I did not enjoy learning from teachers in general.”	
(d) Grading System	3
“Because the education system focuses on the grade, not the material. They wont let you go after majors that you want without a certain GPA, struggling isn’t okay. You gotta be excellent so if it takes you a little longer to process something you’re already at a disadvantage.” [sic]	

Forty-eight responses were either not applicable or missing

Table 6 School/Institutional factors contributing to the participants behavior(s)

	<i>n</i>
(a) Competitive Environment	8
“The high school I went to was incredibly competitive and anything below a 4.0 was not acceptable for the teachers, parents, or councillors”	
“I think that there is a major push for perfectionism in college. I feel that if I don't perform, I will end up in a homeless shelter. The environment of the pre-graduate school persona is very toxic and degrading to the ability of people if they were encouraged to work together. While this class wasn't necessarily terribly challenging, it makes students question the ability as an academic if they get an A-.”[sic]	
“I felt a lot of pressure to do well for the sake of colleges”	
(b) Systemic Issues	18
“I hated the administration at my high school and wanted to defy them, especially knowing my grade wouldn't be impacted by being distracted.”	
“School gives out too much homework. High school in particular. College provides a much more balanced workload than my high school, even with my time management skills forms of getting work were required to keep up in the higher level classes.”	
“A generation of adults who don't understand our workload”	
“Rules. I identify as a libertarian and I feel that I have the right to do whatever I want as long as I don't hurt anyone. No one should force me to do or not do things.”	
“The ability to free use phone and laptop does make it far more likely to get distracted from learning in class”[sic]	
(c) Time Management	5
“It was an 80 page research paper. I mean we all want more time.”	
“My work load was intense when I first started my major.”	

Seventy responses were either not applicable or missing

Table 7 Peer-related factors contributing to the participants behavior(s)

	<i>n</i>
(a) Group Peer Norms	37
“Others were doing the same, we'd be playing together on our laptops”	
“Everyone In the class used their phones.”	
“None of us really cared or wanted to do anything at the time.”	
“Peers appreciated not having to work as well.”	
(b) Peer Pressure	7
“Fear of missing out I guess. Everyone were in it.”[sic]	
“I compared myself to peers, but overall I feel it was me self-sabotaging myself.”	
“My friends told me I shouldn't be skipping class.”	
(c) Negative Attitude towards Peers	5
“Some peers in that class were pretty annoying. I wasn't sad to not hang around them.”	
“My peers are entirely too content with the mediocre reality of our education system. I am often genuinely shocked at the blatant lack of respect for themselves while sitting though this undesirable process. I refuse to feel as though I am part of this demographic at times.” [sic]	
“I didn't care for the peers in my class. They made me feel like they were better than me. One even called me stupid under his breath. They added to the stress of the class, for sure, because I didn't even have my peers to lean on for support in that class.”	

Fifty-two responses were either not applicable or missing

Table 8 Out-of-school factors contributing to the participants behavior(s)

	<i>n</i>
(a) Out-of-school Factors	21
“I would have different issues at home for example my house’s basement got flooded. OR i have troubles with my boyfriend in which we may argue or get emotional.” [sic]	
“We are in school in order to better understand and handle those issues and experiences out side of school. Those who do not believe "out-of-school" issues affect every decision they make greatly are simply unaware.”	
“We were driving back and forth to the hospital and rehab center to visit my dad, so I actually did not have the time I would’ve normally had to finish all my homework”	
“Just my own mental health issues if that counts.”	
(b) Time Management	5
“I had just started my first job, and was very overwhelmed with my school work and extra curriculars.”	
“My parents are currently getting a divorce, and there are certainly family problems, but being that I don’t live at home, these aren’t a daily distraction. Rather, this mostly boils down to whether or not I have time outside of lecture. If I didn’t, I would probably try to learn more in class, rather than taking the time to teach myself in my free time.”[sic]	

Seventy-five responses were either not applicable or missing

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