



Academic Integrity of Millennials: The Impact of Religion and Spirituality

Millicent F. Nelson, Matrecia S. L. James, Angela Miles, Daniel L. Morrell & Sally Sledge

To cite this article: Millicent F. Nelson, Matrecia S. L. James, Angela Miles, Daniel L. Morrell & Sally Sledge (2017) Academic Integrity of Millennials: The Impact of Religion and Spirituality, *Ethics & Behavior*, 27:5, 385-400, DOI: [10.1080/10508422.2016.1158653](https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2016.1158653)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2016.1158653>



Accepted author version posted online: 03 Mar 2016.
Published online: 12 Apr 2016.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 1073



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)



Citing articles: 6 [View citing articles](#)

Academic Integrity of Millennials: The Impact of Religion and Spirituality

Millicent F. Nelson

*Jones College of Business
Middle Tennessee State University*

Matrecia S. L. James

*Davis College of Business
Jacksonville University*

Angela Miles

*School of Business
North Carolina Central University*

Daniel L. Morrell

*Jones College of Business
Middle Tennessee State University*

Sally Sledge

*School of Business
Norfolk State University*

The majority of traditional students enrolled at most colleges and universities are a part of what has been termed the Millennial Generation, also known as Generation Y, which typically describes the group of individuals born in most of the 1980s and 1990s. This cohort's life has been shaped by corporate scandals, economic instability, and worldwide tragedies. Concurrently, business ethics has become a popular topic in the news within the last 2 decades due to the increase in the number of high-profile business scandals. Unfortunately, this trend has also been accompanied by an increased number of reported incidents of academic dishonesty at many major universities. Two underresearched factors that may be related to academic dishonesty and cheating behavior are religiosity and spirituality. This article attempts to shed more light on the relationship between religious beliefs and unethical behavior, with a focus on millennial college students. It is posited that religiosity and spirituality influence an individual's attitudes, views, decisions, and ultimately behaviors. The results of this study indicate that religiosity but not spirituality is a predictor of students' attitudes toward cheating and cheating behavior.

Keywords: academic dishonesty, cheating, millennials, religiosity, spirituality

Business ethics has become a popular topic in the news within the last decade due to the increase in the number of high-profile business scandals that have rocked the corporate world. Unfortunately, this trend has also been accompanied by an increased number of reported incidents of academic dishonesty at many major universities (McMahon, 2007). Some research has shown that students who cheat in school may also become employees who are unethical in business organizations (Lawson, 2004). As a result, business scholars in the areas of teaching and research need to give these topics more attention in order to understand the factors that may prevent such future events. Previous research has investigated individual factors such as gender, age, and number of years in school as antecedents for academic dishonesty. Two underresearched factors that may be related to academic dishonesty and cheating behavior are religiosity and spirituality. For example, a recent study by Baumsteiger, Chenneville, and McGuire (2013) found that religiosity and spirituality are correlated with moral reasoning in college students. Therefore, religiosity and spirituality may provide an understanding of principal values that are important for academic integrity, as well as ethical decision making and behavior.

Although the practice of religion differs from culture to culture, there are generally acceptable norms of behavior or values that are shared worldwide. Many of these values come either directly or indirectly from religion and/or spiritual beliefs. For example, the Golden Rule is a basic business principle that advocates reciprocity or treating others as you would want to be treated. Although the Golden Rule is sometimes attributed to Christianity, this concept has significance in most other religious traditions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Judaism (Wattles, 1987). This article attempts to shed more light on the relationship between religious beliefs and unethical behavior, with a focus on millennial college students. It is posited that religion and spirituality influence an individual's attitudes, views, decisions, and ultimately their behaviors.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a fundamental principle that is the basis of many educational institutions, thus providing an ethical code to which faculty and students are held in academia. Past research that has examined the prevalence of cheating in academic institutions has had somewhat mixed results. Contemporary research finds that 56% of graduate business students admitted to cheating within the past year (McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2006). Other research reports the percentage of undergraduates who have admitted to having cheated as low as 9% to as high as 90% (Stuber-McEwen, Wiseley, & Hoggatt, 2009). No exact cause has been identified for this, but literature notes that a combination of individual and social factors is associated with academic misconduct. Gerdeman (2000) grouped these factors into four main categories: individual characteristics, peer influences, instructor influences, and institutional policy. Individual characteristics refer to character traits that make a person unique, which might include things such as age, gender, or aspects related to one's education (e.g., major, year in school, grade point average, etc.). For example, research has found that students with lower grade point averages or students who feel the pressure of maintaining scholarships are more likely to engage in academic dishonesty (Stuber-McEwen et al., 2009).

Peer influence is also a major factor that could impact cheating behaviors. Peer influence is the influence of a social group on an individual and can be one of the most powerful influencers in the human psyche (Gerdeman, 2000). The influence may come in the form of negative or positive directions; however, research has demonstrated that peer influence generally motivates more students toward cheating behavior and not away from it (Underwood & Szabo, 2003).

Students are apt to cheat if they consider their friends to be those who regularly cheat or consider cheating to be an acceptable practice (Chapman, Davis, Toy, & Wright, 2004). Another factor for academic integrity is instructor influence or the effect that educators have on students (Gerdeman, 2000). Research has found that in some cases this influence continues through the adult life of the student. Students who perceive their instructors to be less concerned about the issue are more likely to engage in academic dishonesty. Also, students are more likely to cheat if they believe the instructor to be unfair in any context of the classroom (Stuber-McEwen et al., 2009). The final factor associated with academic misconduct is institutional policy, or the procedures that have been adopted by academic institutions (Gerdeman, 2000). This could come in the form of honor codes, student and teacher handbooks, or pledges. Pringle and Sledge (2015) found that 68% of college students surveyed received ethics education in college, and more than 60% knew the proper channels to report unethical behavior at their universities. These findings denote the trend toward ethics education and a focus on academic integrity at the secondary and university levels.

Millennial Generation

The majority of traditional students enrolled at most colleges and universities are a part of what has been called the Millennial Generation. The term Millennial Generation, also known as Generation Y or the Net Generation, describes the group of individuals born in the 1980s and 1990s (Nimon, 2007). Howe and Strauss (2000) referred to the millennials as those people born from 1982 to 2012, a 20-year range. For the purposes of this study, we are focusing on college-age millennials, ranging from ages 18 to 27. Their workplace values include feedback, recognition, fulfillment, advanced technology, and fun (Fogg, 2008). This group's life has been shaped by corporate scandals, economic instability, and worldwide tragedies.

Millennials are technologically advanced, achievement oriented, politically/socially conscious, and diverse. The current generation of students grew up engaged by the technological aspects of society. Computers, telephones, and other electronics have all experienced major advancements during their time, and this generation has learned to adapt according to these changes. Millennials are the first generation to accept and engage in acts such as tweeting, texting, and using social networking websites (Ellison, 2007). These students are heavily consumed by electronics and use them in many facets of life, both professional and personal. Technology has been cited as one of the most identified causes related to a decline in academic integrity (Etter, Cramer, & Finn, 2006). Generation Y heavily relies on everything electronic as technology has transformed both the home and school environments. They use a variety of Internet resources that, although beneficial to the learning environment, are used by some students as a resource for cutting and pasting material into assignments from websites or purchasing term papers from online term-paper mills. This has given rise to a recent increase in plagiarism-detection software, which is utilized by both instructors and students to avoid plagiarism and to ensure academic integrity (Scanlon & Neumann, 2002).

Students of the Millennial Generation are achievement oriented and often require structure (Behrens, 2009). Societal pressures have influenced much of their life, therefore grooming these characteristics. This generation was reared by parents who did not want them to make the same mistakes as the previous generation. They were expected to perform above the norm and were held to high expectations. These characteristics may explain the tendency for academic

dishonesty. Cheating is widespread among college students and is increasing to the level of an epidemic in our schools (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2001). Much of this can be attributed to the generational temptations that affect the students' ability to work ethically in academic institutions. Some students cheat because they do not want to exert the necessary effort to make the grades, and others cheat simply because they know that they can get away with it.

Religiosity

Religiosity as a construct is a large phenomenon to study, but one succinct definition that has been used in the literature is "an organized system of beliefs, practices, rituals and symbols, designed to facilitate closeness to the sacred and transcendent and to foster religious communities" (Lavretsky, 2010, p. 752). For the purposes of this article, we use this definition to include a person's participation in organized religious beliefs, practices, rituals, and symbols. For many people, religion serves as a conduit between God and human beings (James, Miles, & Mullins, 2011). Religions can create ordered communities that are coalesced around common principles or beliefs while achieving the "social" and "self-actualization" needs from Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy. Thus, it is no surprise that a recent Pew Research survey found that approximately 83% of all Americans are affiliated with a religion (Pew Research Center, 2008).

Religion has been a consistent part of management research since the 1970s. However, earlier articles typically treated religion as a minor or moderating variable rather than a variable of focus (P. Connor & Becker, 1973). In the business literature, often religion and ethics are discussed together. One study found that many executives have a positive self-image, which includes beliefs that their business decisions are informed by their religious persuasions (Nash, 1994). However, results from this stream of work have been mixed. Although Hegarty and Sims (1978) found no relationship between an individual's religion and decisions about business ethics, McNichols and Zimmerer (1985) found a significant positive relationship between a person's beliefs in religion and their ethical business behaviors. Another study involving business school undergraduates found that the students who engaged in more religious behaviors (such as church attendance and religious activities) were significantly less likely to exhibit cheating on tests (Burton, Talpade, & Haynes, 2011). In a panel study of business students, Tang and Tang (2010) found that intrinsic religiosity reduces business-related unethical behavior intentions. However, other empirical findings from the fields of sociology and psychology state that religiosity does not in and of itself lead to ethical behavior (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993).

There are many complicated facets of a person's religious self, just as there are a number of complex factors that become a part of a person's psyche when decisions are made. This explanation dovetails with the economic theory known as rational choice (Becker, 1976). In this theory, rational decisions by economic actors (i.e., people) may be expected, but often they do not materialize in the real world. Thus, human decision making is a complicated process and cannot always be predicted. In addition, the disparate results from the studies in this research area may be attributed to the lack of detailed analysis (Weaver & Agle, 2002).

Although there are a number of studies that focus on religious participation and ethical behavior, we believe that this topic needs to be revisited in light of recent data on religion in America. In the United States, religious participation tends to increase with age; the Millennial Generation exhibits the least amount of religious behavior (Pond, Smith, & Clement, 2010). According to the Pew Research Center, one in four millennials is unaffiliated with any faith or

religion, which is a much lower rate than their parents or grandparents experienced at similar ages (Pond et al., 2010). Pew reports that although 45% of millennials said that religion is “very important” in their lives, this percentage is smaller than older Americans of today. However, it is similar to data gathered from a 1978 Gallup Poll, where 39% of baby boomers (those born in the United States between 1946 and 1964) maintained that religion was very important in their lives. Further, those millennials who do affiliate with a faith group state that they are “strong” members of their chosen religion (Pond et al., 2010). Therefore, these recent data reveal that young people are affiliating with formal religions at lower rates than their predecessors did, but those who do affiliate exhibit strong faith behaviors.

Sometimes the engrained religious beliefs are so strong that the dissonance between religious attitudes and cheating behaviors creates internal conflict when millennials realize that their behaviors do not align with their attitudes. For example, a recent study demonstrated that having millennial-age college students write out the Ten Commandments after cheating incidents created a profound-enough guilt that it affected their handwriting, thus signifying themselves as cheaters (Tang, 2012). Accordingly, the following hypotheses are offered:

H1a: Religiosity will be negatively related to the cheating behavior of millennials.

H1b: Religiosity will be negatively related to millennials’ attitudes toward cheating.

Spirituality

As scholars and practitioners continue to explore and examine the role that spirituality plays in the lives of employees, leaders, and organizations as a whole, attention has begun to shift to tangible, measurable outcomes related to this phenomenon. To study spirituality, it is important to identify its unique distinctness from other similar concepts. Specifically, it is necessary to point out that although there may be a relationship between religion and spirituality, the two concepts are not the same. Spirituality spreads beyond practices and rituals to encompass an individual’s relationship to the transcendent and understanding of life. It is perceived as an acute consciousness that is autonomous of one’s efforts and that intensifies awareness of self, others and the world (Lavretsky, 2010).

Although sometimes used interchangeably with religiosity, spirituality is more about belief than behavior. Even though someone may be spiritual *and* religious, it is also possible for someone to be one and not the other (Becvar, 1997). Specifically, in this study, spirituality is conceptualized as an awareness of interconnectedness involved in work/life experiences that enrich overall performance. The focus of spirituality, as defined here, is on living according to a higher purpose, finding meaning in life, creating inner wholeness, seeking connectedness with others, and achieving self-transcendence toward the supreme value one perceives (Gibbons, 2000; James et al., 2011; Schneiders, 1989). It is further posited that spirituality influences personal views and attitudes, decisions making, and behavioral efforts.

One study of spirituality and attitudes described spirituality as a developmental engine that propels the search for connectedness, meaning, and purpose (Pawar, 2009). This definition suggests a stronger urge for value congruence, social responsibility, and personal life meaning. Empirical and conceptual studies support the notion that spirituality is incorporated into individuals’ ideals and values in work settings (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Bloch & Richmond, 1998; James et al., 2011; Kolodinsky, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2008;

Milliman, Ferguson, Trickett, & Condemi, 1999). Attitudes that have been linked to spirituality are work reward satisfaction, job involvement, organizational identification, and organizational commitment (Kolodinsky et al., 2008). In addition, individual spirituality has been found to have an impact on both positive (citizenship behavior) and negative (counter productive work behavior) behaviors at work (James et al., 2011).

However, there is sparse research that focuses on the impact that spirituality has on students who are preparing to enter the workforce. This is a critical void, especially as it relates to business students who are aspiring to be leaders in organizations. According to a study exploring the spirituality of university students, spiritual individuals energize commitment and service and find higher purpose in their work, noting that spirituality strengthened college students' career passions and desire to reach their full potential (Rehm & Allison, 2009). In a multicountry service industry study using multiple measures of the constructs, Sledge, Miles, and Van Sambeek (2011) found that employees stated that their spirituality and religious beliefs affected their organizational behaviors and decisions.

One of the few research endeavors that targeted spirituality in management education suggests that spirituality impacts ethical values and plays a central role in guiding behavior (Grzeda & Assogbavi, 2011). Because spiritual values are believed to influence managerial integrity and morality (Cavanaugh, 1999), it is imperative that scholars develop a better understanding of how student spirituality is operationalized in business schools in order to understand its probable impact on behavior during ethical dilemmas. Spirituality is expected to be one of the factors that influence and shape the outlooks and attitudes of individuals, and thereby impact their reactions and responses to the external environment. Thus,

H2a: Spirituality will be negatively related to the cheating behavior of millennials.

H2b: Spirituality will be negatively related to millennials' attitudes toward cheating.

Attitudes and Behavior

An attitude is a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The components of attitude include the (a) affective component—feelings or emotions about an object, (b) the cognitive component—beliefs or ideas one has about an object, and (c) the behavioral component—how one intends to act toward someone or something (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1964). In other words, an attitude is a belief or feeling regarding objects, situations, and people, and often directs reactions and behaviors. It has been suggested that attitudinal strength and attitudes held in support of self have strong links to behavior (Pratkanis & Turner, 1994). Accordingly, religiosity and spirituality may strengthen attitudes. Moreover, self-support attitudes, like that of the willingness to cheat, may make the cheating behavior more salient.

Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985, 1991) offers linkage between attitudes and behavior. TPB posits that an attitude toward a behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control lead to behavioral intentions that subsequently result in a behavior. TPB recognizes that when a situation affords a person complete control over the performance of behavior, then intentions alone are sufficient to predict behavior. However, in some cases a person lacks volitional control perhaps due to lack of money, skills/abilities, and time, conditions that students may encounter during periods of heavy course demands.

TPB has predicted intentions in contexts including consumer behavior, weight loss, voting (Hansen & Jensen, 2007), public school selection (Goh, 2011), and ethics (Riemenschneider, Leonard, & Manly, 2011). Although few studies have used the theory to focus on academic integrity, a study by Stone, Jawahar, and Kisamore (2009) used TPB to predict cheating intentions and behavior while extending the model to include an antecedent noted as justifications. Justifications are cognitive components closely related to attitudes, norms, and perceived control. In this study, the antecedent components of TPB are further examined to provide additional consideration on cheating behavior. The attitude toward cheating is further evaluated together with the subjective norm or perceived pressure to comply or not to comply with the behavior. As discussed earlier, these norms are represented by the millennials' religiosity and spirituality. Thus, this study further advances the work of student ethics and academic integrity by examining the impact of religiosity and spirituality on the attitude to cheat. Based on the understanding of how religiosity and spirituality influence attitudes and behavior, the following hypotheses are posited:

- H3a: Attitude toward cheating will mediate the relationship between religiosity and cheating behavior of millennials.
- H3b: Attitude toward cheating will mediate the relationship between spirituality and cheating behavior of millennials.

METHODS

Participants and Data Collection

The sample consisted of undergraduate students at four different business schools throughout the southeastern United States. These were medium-sized institutions (5,000–10,000 students) and included private, public, research, and teaching-based universities. All schools were accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, with honor codes, and common requirements for students to use referencing and citation processes to avoid plagiarism in both traditional and virtual formats.

The sample demographics included 56% male and 44% female; 51% of respondents identified as White, 34% as African American, 5% as Asian, 3% as Hispanic, and 7% as Other. Ten percent of the students were freshmen, 6% were sophomores, 26% were juniors, and 48% were seniors. Subjects were asked to complete an anonymous and confidential questionnaire in exchange for extra course credit. Faculty members reviewed “cheating behaviors” with the students before they took the survey, such as using extra time on a timed assignment, using resources during a closed book test, talking to others about an individual assignment, or using websites during a “locked-down online exam.”

The initial sample size was 306; however, because this study was intended to focus on college students' perceptions and behavior from the Millennial Generation—those born between the years 1982 and 2012 (Howe & Strauss, 2000)—37 students older than 27 were dropped from the study. Furthermore, missing data on either independent or dependent study variables netted a final sample size of 256. Thus the target population was college students between the ages of 18 and 27.

Respondents self-reported information about their attitudes toward academic integrity and cheating behaviors. Some scholars (McCabe et al., 2001) have mentioned the fact that

self-reported data may lead to results based on desirability scores or misreporting due to time-lapse effects. However, most academic studies about cheating do involve self-reporting (Burton et al., 2011), on the part of students and faculty, as these responses will give insights into the rationale for their behaviors. Anonymity precludes retribution effects. Therefore, we use self-reporting measures here.

Measures

Religiosity

Religiosity was measured by Sutton and Huba's (1995) methodology, as it was created to be used in the college environment. The instrument was developed to obtain students' religious participation. This measure consisted of four items including the questions "How often do you attend church?" and "To what extent has religion played a major role in your life?" Responses were measured on a Likert scale of 1 (*a great deal*), 2 (*a fair amount*), 3 (*not much*), and 4 (*not at all*). Alpha reliability of this scale was .81.

Spirituality

Spirituality was measured by K. M. Connor, Davidson, and Lee's (2003) instrument developed to measure general spirituality. This instrument used a five-item Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include "I believe in life having a purpose" and "I believe in the existence of a spiritual being." Alpha reliability of this scale was .95. Kapuscinski and Masters (2010) addressed the challenges in measuring this construct and provided a review of scale development practices for 24 measures of spirituality, detailing theological and methodological concerns. In light of these findings, we use the scale developed by K. M. Connor et al. (2003) because its response scale fits with our other measures in the short survey format.

Attitude Toward Cheating and Cheating Behavior

Attitudes toward cheating and cheating behavior was measured with items taken from Kisamore, Stone, and Jawahar's (2007) academic integrity inventory. Attitude toward cheating included 12 items measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include "It is always wrong to cheat" and "I would not care if my friends knew I have cheated." Alpha reliability of this scale was .90.

Cheating behavior included 10 items measured on a Likert scale of 1 (*never*), 2 (*once*), 3 (*a few times*), 4 (*several times*), and 5 (*many times*). Sample items include "Copied material from another student and turned it in as your own work" and "Cheated on a test in any way." Alpha reliability of this scale was also .90.

Control Variables

Consistent with Kisamore et al. (2007), age and gender were included as control variables. In addition, self-reported grade point average was included. Age was measured using a categorical scale where 1 represents subjects ages 18–20, 2 represents subjects ages 21–23, and 3 represents

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cheating behavior	2.03	.80						
Attitude toward cheating	2.47	.57	.60**					
Religiosity	2.36	.83	-.11	-.14*				
Spirituality	4.14	1.13	.00	-.07	.30**			
Age ^a	2.02	.57	.03	-.08	-.09	-.03		
Gender ^b	1.44	.50	-.19**	-.19**	.02	.12*	.03	
Grade point average ^c	5.40	1.02	-.16*	-.09	-.05	-.03	.03	.03

^aAge is represented by 1 (18–20), 2 (21–23), and 3 (24–27). ^bGender is represented by 1 (male) and 2 (female).

^cGrade point average is represented by 1 (less than 1.0), 2 (between 1.0 and 1.5), 3 (between 1.5 and 2.0), 4 (between 2.0 and 2.5), 5 (between 2.5 and 3.0), 6 (between 3.0 and 3.5), and 7 (greater than 3.5) on a 4.0 scale.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

subjects ages 24–27. As shown in Table 1, both gender and grade point average were significantly correlated with cheating behavior.

Analysis and Results

Hierarchical linear (ordinary least squares) regression with controls was used to test the hypotheses involving direct relationships (H1a, H1b, H2a, H2b). Controls were entered into Step 1 of the regression model, followed by main effects in Step 2. Table 2 shows the hierarchical linear regression results for the dependent variable of cheating behavior. Hypotheses 1a and 2a predicted that religiosity and spirituality (respectively) would be negatively related to cheating behavior. As seen in Step 2 of Table 2, religiosity is significantly negatively associated with cheating behavior ($B = -.12, p < .05$). However, spirituality is not significantly related to cheating behavior in this study. Therefore, Hypothesis 1a was supported and Hypothesis 2a was not supported.

Hypotheses 1b and 2b predicted that religiosity and spirituality (again, respectively) would be negatively related to attitudes toward cheating. Table 3 shows the hierarchical linear regression results for the dependent variable of attitude toward cheating. As predicted, religiosity is significantly negatively related to attitude toward cheating ($B = -.12, p < .05$) as seen in Step 2 of Table 3. However, again, spirituality did not receive support as a predictor of attitude toward cheating. Therefore, Hypothesis 1b was supported and Hypothesis 2b did not receive support in this study.

Hypothesis 3a predicted that attitude toward cheating would mediate the relationship between religiosity and cheating behavior. To test this relationship, we employed Baron and Kenny's (1986) test for mediation. It involves a four-step approach where all four criteria must be met in order to resolve that there is indeed mediation. The first step in this study is to show that there is a relationship between the independent variable in the mediation (religiosity) and the dependent variable (cheating behavior). This we have shown in Step 2 of Table 2 and already reported in the results for Hypothesis 1a. Second, there needs to be a relationship between the independent variable (religiosity) and the mediator (attitude toward cheating). This is shown in Step 2 of Table 3 and reported earlier in the results for Hypothesis 1b. The third step is to test for a relationship between the mediator (attitude toward cheating) and the dependent variable (cheating behavior). This is shown in Step 2' of

TABLE 2
Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Cheating Behavior on Religiosity, Spirituality, and Attitude Toward Cheating

	<i>Step 1</i>		<i>Step 2</i>		<i>Step 2'</i>		<i>Step 2''</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Age	.05	.09	.03	.09	.09	.07	.09	.07
Gender	-.31**	.10	-.31**	.10	-.13	.08	-.15	.08
Grade point average	-.12*	.05	-.12*	.05	-.08	.04	-.08	.04
Spirituality			.04	.05			-.04	.05
Religiosity			-.12*	.06			.04	.04
Attitude toward cheating					.82**	.07	.82**	.07

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

TABLE 3
Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Attitude Towards Cheating on Religiosity and Spirituality

	<i>Step 1</i>		<i>Step 2</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Age	-.06	.06	.03	.06
Gender	-.21**	.07	-.20**	.07
Grade point average	-.05	.03	-.05	.03
Spirituality			.04	.03
Religiosity			-.10*	.05

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2, where attitude toward cheating is shown to be significantly related to cheating behavior ($B = .82, p < .01$). The last step in testing for mediation is to enter the dependent variable in question (religiosity) into a regression model with the mediator (attitude toward cheating) and test for a relationship with the independent variable (cheating behavior).

For full mediation to occur, the mediator must be significantly related to the dependent variable and the independent variable must be no longer significantly related to the dependent variable, thereby demonstrating that the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable is obscured by the mediator. This is shown in Step 2'' of Table 2, where attitude toward cheating is significantly related to cheating behavior ($B = .82, p < .01$) and religiosity is no longer significantly related to cheating behavior ($B = .04, p > .05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 3a is fully supported. Hypothesis 3b predicted that the same mediational relationship would hold true with regards to spirituality. Because spirituality was not significantly related to cheating behavior, Hypothesis 3b did not receive support.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that religiosity but not spirituality is a predictor of students' attitudes toward cheating and cheating behavior. The result for spirituality is contrary to previous

research that suggests that spirituality (or intrinsic religiosity) has the potential to foster positive situations (e.g., Chen & Tang, 2013; James et al., 2011). Perhaps this stems from the spiritual development stage of the study sample. Spiritual development of individuals has been identified as one of the important contexts for establishing spirituality. Spiritual development is a process during which the psychological welfare rooted in intuitive thinking is enhanced. Growth and development of spirituality in people is believed to cause mental growth and moral reinforcement (Soltani & Joneghani, 2012).

One study that specifically focused on men and women in college asserted that students generally became more committed to integrating spirituality into their lives as they progress through their college years (Bryant, 2007). In keeping with Sheikhejad and Ahmadi (2008), we believe that increased spiritual development and awareness of certain aspects of spirituality, such as honesty, changes students' ways of working with others. Thus, the relatively young age of this sample (19–27 years old) might help to explain the unexpected findings. We believe that is an indicator of immature spiritual development. The correlations in Table 1 support this notion. Age and spirituality are significant and positively correlated, whereas spirituality is negatively correlated with cheating behavior. Perhaps an older population of students would yield different findings. More exploration is needed to better define the age–spirituality relationship.

However, because religiosity in this study emphasized behaviors, it is not surprising to find that students who behaved in “religious activities” also demonstrated more academic integrity. The act of attending church and participating in other religious activities likely reinforces the positive and ethical behaviors of students by keeping their values salient to them. In this case, students' strong attitudes toward attending church and participating in other religious activities increase awareness of right and wrong, resulting in academic integrity.

Implications

This research builds on previous academic dishonesty research in college students by clarifying the differential relationships that religion and spirituality might have on cheating behaviors. The findings that participating in religious activities was significantly (and negatively) related to attitudes toward cheating were not surprising in light of previous research finding a similar relationship among business executives and ethical behavior (McNichols & Zimmerer, 1985). More surprising was the lack of a similar significant relationship between spirituality and attitudes toward cheating. These findings are important in light of a recent study finding that 72% of millennials identified themselves as being more spiritual than religious (Grossman, 2010).

Research has demonstrated that students who cheat in school develop into employees who cheat at work (Lawson, 2004). Thus, it is important to address the potential remedies to academic dishonesty. This study highlights the importance of participation in religious activities as a means of setting a consistent reminder to millennial college students of their beliefs. Although religious participation among the Millennial Generation is the lowest among other generations (Pond et al., 2010), universities may be able to increase this participation by providing more access to external religious organizations that wish to provide on-campus activities. For nonreligious students, university honor codes might serve as reminders of their beliefs (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2002). Having students sign an honor code before taking an exam or turning in an assignment may help to reduce academic misconduct in these students.

Limitations and Future Research

Our results need to be interpreted for the targets of the research, millennial college students. We purposely only studied one cultural cohort, Generation Y, and results should be understood in the context of this group. In addition, the variables used in this study were assessed via self-reports, creating the possibility that method bias may have contaminated some of our findings. However, many of the study variables involved measurements of attitudes and behaviors inaccessible to others that necessitated the measurement of these variables from the individual level (cf. Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Furthermore, method variance should be considered seriously when there appears to be a pervasive influence that operates to inflate the observed relationships (James, Gent, Hatter, & Corey, 1979). An examination of the correlation matrix in Table 1 indicates that the correlations are not uncharacteristically high. Nevertheless, further research might examine these relationships via objective measures. We suggest an in-depth evaluation of attitudes toward cheating, religiosity, and cheating behaviors.

Future research can expand this study to a broader more diverse population of students and examine additional outcomes. Such expansions would potentially increase the generalizability of our findings. Specifically, the spiritual developmental process may have had an impact on the results of this study. Examining various age groups would provide further insight on personal spiritual growth and the decision-making process. Another variable of interest that would add meaning to the study would be culture. As pointed out by Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), culture impacts organizational behavior, and variations within cultures provide valuable insights into some of these differences. We plan to incorporate this variable into future related studies.

In addition, only one indicator of academic integrity (cheating) was examined. The characteristics and consequences related to cheating in the university environment may have had an impact on individuals' decision to actually engage in the behavior. Unfortunately, these effects were not accounted for, therefore research on other outcome variables would be beneficial. Due to the small sample size, effects of the variable interactions must be taken cautiously. A replication of the study with a larger sample may provide greater generalizability of the findings.

Watson and Sottile (2010) found that in a comparative study, college students in traditional classes admitted to cheating more than their online counterparts, though the predominant thought is that more cheating would occur in online courses. The authors explain that this may be due to familiarity and collaboration among the traditional students. Yet with trends toward more online classes and more technologies being used in the field of education, this topic merits further research.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the organized beliefs and rituals offered by religion provide guidance and direction to millennial students. Once these values become internalized, students may adopt them personally to help with ethical dilemmas once they become business executives. Attendance in church and other religious activities offer a constant reminder of the consequences of doing wrong. Although many private and public universities used to require student attendance at chapel services, this practice started to decline in the 1960s and is now reserved for only a few private, religiously affiliated schools (Stamm, 2003), thus leaving the majority of universities to examine other means of reminding students not to behave unethically. To remedy the existing culture of cheating in

academia, McCabe and Pavela (2000) of the Center for Academic Integrity recommended that colleges adopt a modified honor code where students are highly involved in the creation and workings of the system as a way to reduce academic dishonesty among college students. The content of these honor codes is consistent with the values taught in churches and other religious organizations. Indeed, recent research has found that when students are asked to sign an honor code prior to participating in a task where cheating was an option, cheating behavior is eliminated (Ariely, 2009). McCabe et al. (2002) found that a positive academic integrity culture at a college or university had the largest impact on perceptions of academic dishonesty and cheating at the institution.

Another recommendation for eliminating academic dishonesty is to provide preventable measures in the classroom. The use of proctors and multiple versions and colors of an exam can limit opportunities for cheating as well as the banning of electronics, hats, water bottles, and other potential objects that could be utilized for cheating. Some professors have also distributed their own answer sheets and other material in the classroom to deter cheating behaviors. Finally, professors must respond swiftly with disciplinary action if cheating does occur (Davis, 1993). Doing so reinforces the notion of the authoritative, punishing, and stern figure who may be needed to reduce and/or eliminate cheating for millennials who are achievement oriented by holding them to high expectations.

Although our study provides a good first look at academic integrity among college-age millennials, we are prompted to continue our research. In future studies, we intend to use multiple measures of the constructs for a richer level of analysis. Increasing the diversity of our students in the study from many perspectives will also generate additional meaningful results. Looking at additional relationships between the constructs of attitudes toward cheating, spirituality, religiosity, and cheating behaviors will prove to be a useful exercise in the exploration of these important topics for higher education institutions worldwide.

REFERENCES

- Ajzen, I. (1985). From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior. In J. Kuhl & J. Beckmann (Eds.), *Action-control: From cognition to behavior* (pp. 11–40). Heidelberg, Germany: Springer.
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50, 179–211. doi:10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T
- Ariely, D. (2009). *Predictably Irrational: The hidden forces that shape our decisions*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Ashmos, D. P., & Duchon, D. (2000). Spirituality at work: A conceptualization and measure. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 9(2), 134–145.
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(6), 1173–1182. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.51.6.1173
- Batson, C., Schoenrade, P., & Ventis, W. (1993). *Religion and the individual: A social-psychological perspective*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Baumsteiger, R., Chennerville, T., & McGuire, J. F. (2013). The roles of religiosity and spirituality in moral reasoning. *Ethics & Behavior*, 23(4), 266–277. doi:10.1080/10508422.2013.782814
- Becker, G. (1976). The economic approach to human behavior. In G. Becker (Ed.), *The economic approach to human behavior* (pp. 3–14). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Becvar, D. (1997). *Soul healing*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Behrens, W. (2009). Managing millennials. *Marketing Health Services*, 29(1), 19–21.
- Bloch, D. R., & Richmond, L. J. (1998). *SoulWork: Finding the work you love, loving the work you have*. Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black.

- Bryant, A. N. (2007). Gender differences in spiritual development during the college years. *Sex Roles, 56*(11–12), 835–846. doi:10.1007/s11199-007-9240-2
- Burton, J., Talpade, S., & Haynes, J. (2011). Religiosity and test-taking ethics among business school students. *Journal of Academic and Business Ethics, 4*, 1–8.
- Cavanaugh, G. F. (1999). Spirituality for managers: Context and critique. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 12*(3), 186–199. doi:10.1108/09534819910273793
- Chapman, K. J., Davis, R., Toy, D., & Wright, L. (2004). Academic integrity in the business school environment: I'll get by with a little help from my friends. *Journal of Marketing Education, 26*(3), 236–249. doi:10.1177/0273475304268779
- Chen, Y. J., & Tang, T. L. P. (2013). The bright and dark sides of religiosity among university students: Do gender, college major, and income matter? *Journal of Business Ethics, 115*(3), 531–553. doi:10.1007/s10551-012-1407-2
- Connor, K. M., Davidson, J. R. T., & Lee, L. (2003). Spirituality, resilience, and anger in survivors of violent trauma: A community survey. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 16*(5), 487–494. doi:10.1023/A:1025762512279
- Connor, P. E., & Becker, B. W. (1973, August). Values and comparative organizational research. In *Academy of Management Proceedings*, (Vol. 1973, No. 1, pp. 88–94). Academy of Management.
- Davis, B. G. (1993). *Tools for teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13*(1), 210–230. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x
- Etter, S., Cramer, J. J., & Finn, S. (2006). Origins of dishonesty: Ethical orientations and personality associated with attitudes about cheating with information technology. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education, 39*(2), 133–155. doi:10.1080/15391523.2006.10782477
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fogg, P. (2008). When generations collide. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 54*, 18–20.
- Gerde, R. D. (2000). *Academic dishonesty and the community college* (ERIC Digest ED447840).
- Gibbons, P. (2000). *Spirituality at work: A pre-theoretical review* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Birkbeck College, University of London, London, UK.
- Goh, E. (2011). Predicting parental intentions behind public school selection using the theory of planned behavior. *International Review on Public and Non-Profit Marketing, 8*(2), 97–110. doi:10.1007/s12208-011-0066-9
- Grossman, C. (2010, October 14). Survey: 72% of millennials 'more spiritual than religious'. *USA Today*, p. 3.
- Grzeda, M., & Assogbavi, T. (2011). Spirituality in management education and development: Toward an authentic transformation. *Journal of American Academy of Business, Cambridge, 16*(2), 238–244.
- Hansen, T., & Jensen, J. M. (2007). Understanding voters' decisions: A theory of planned behavior approach. *Innovative Marketing, 3*(4), 86–93, 137.
- Hegarty, W., & Sims, H. (1978). Some determinants of unethical decision behavior: An experiment. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 63*(4), 451–457. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.63.4.451
- Hofstede, G., & Hofstede, G. (2005). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Howe, N., & Strauss, W. (2000). *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*. New York, NY: Vintage.
- James, L. R., Gent, M. J., Hatter, J. J., & Corey, K. E. (1979). Correlates of psychological influence: An illustration of the psychological climate approach to work environment perceptions. *Personnel Psychology, 32*, 563–588. doi:10.1111/j.1744-6570.1979.tb02154.x
- James, M. L., Miles, A. K., & Mullins, T. (2011). The interactive effects of spirituality and trait cynicism on citizenship and counterproductive work behaviors. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion, 8*(2), 165–182. doi:10.1080/14766086.2011.581814
- Kapuscinski, A., & Masters, K. (2010). The current status of measures of spirituality: A critical review of scale development. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 2*(4), 191–205. doi:10.1037/a0020498
- Kisamore, J. L., Stone, T. H., & Jawahar, I. M. (2007). Academic integrity: The relationship between individual and situational factors on misconduct contemplations. *Journal of Business Ethics, 75*(4), 381–394. doi:10.1007/s10551-006-9260-9
- Kolodinsky, R. W., Giacalone, R. A., & Jurkiewicz, C. L. (2008). Workplace values and outcomes: Exploring personal, organizational, and interactive workplace spirituality. *Journal of Business Ethics, 81*(2), 465–480. doi:10.1007/s10551-007-9507-0
- Lavretsky, H. (2010). Spirituality and aging. *Aging Health, 6*(6), 749–769. doi:10.2217/ah.10.70
- Lawson, R. A. (2004). Is classroom cheating related to business students' propensity to cheat in the 'real world'? *Journal of Business Ethics, 49*(2), 189–199. doi:10.1023/B:BUSI.0000015784.34148.cb

- Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. New York, NY: Harper.
- McCabe, D. L., Butterfield, K. D., & Trevino, L. K. (2006). Academic dishonesty in graduate business programs: Prevalence, causes, and proposed action. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 5(3), 294–305. doi:10.5465/AMLE.2006.22697018
- McCabe, D. L., & Pavela, G. (2000). Some good news about academic integrity. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 32(5), 32–38. doi:10.1080/00091380009605738
- McCabe, D. L., Trevino, L. K., & Butterfield, K. D. (2001). Cheating in academic institutions: A decade of research. *Ethics & Behavior*, 11(3), 219–232. doi:10.1207/S15327019EB1103_2
- McCabe, D. L., Trevino, L. K., & Butterfield, K. D. (2002). Honor codes and other contextual influences on academic integrity: A replication and extension to modified honor code settings. *Research in Higher Education*, 43(3), 357–378. doi:10.1023/A:1014893102151
- McMahon, R. (2007, September 9). Everybody does it. *San Francisco Chronicle*, p. 18.
- McNichols, C., & Zimmerer, T. (1985). Situational ethics: An empirical study of differentiators of student attitudes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 4(3), 175–180. doi:10.1007/BF00705616
- Milliman, J., Ferguson, J., Trickett, D., & Condemni, B. (1999). Spirit and community at Southwest Airlines: An investigation of a spiritual values-based model. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 12(3), 221–233. doi:10.1108/09534819910273928
- Nash, L. (1994). The evangelical CEO. *Across the Board*, 31(2), 26–34.
- Nimon, S. (2007). Generation Y and higher education: The other Y2K. *Journal of Institutional Research*, 13(1), 24–41.
- Pawar, B. S. (2009). Individual spirituality, workplace spirituality and work attitudes: An empirical test of direct and interaction effects. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 30(8), 759–777. doi:10.1108/01437730911003911
- Pew Research Group. (2008). *U. S. Religious Landscape Survey*. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. Retrieved from <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>
- Podsakoff, P. M., Mackenzie, S. B., Lee, J., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879
- Pond, A., Smith, G., & Clement, S. (2010). *Religion among millennials*. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. Retrieved from <http://www.pewforum.org/Age/Religion-Among-the-Millennials.aspx>
- Pratkanis, A. R., & Turner, M. E. (1994). Of what value is a job attitude? A socio-cognitive analysis. *Human Relations*, 47(12), 1545–1576. doi:10.1177/001872679404701206
- Pringle, P., & Sledge, S. (2015). Student perceptions about collegiate ethics: What we can learn from our students. *Review of Business and Technology Research*, 12(1), 112–115.
- Rehm, M. L., & Allison, B. N. (2009). Exploring spirituality of university FCS students: A resource for resiliency. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 101(4), 12–17.
- Riemenschneider, C. K., Leonard, L. N. K., & Manly, T. S. (2011). Students' ethical decision-making in an information technology context: A theory of planned behavior approach. *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 22(3), 203–214.
- Rosenberg, M., & Hovland, C. (1964). Cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of attitudes. In C. Hovland & M. Rosenberg (Eds.), *Attitude organization and change* (pp. 1–14). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scanlon, P., & Neumann, D. R. (2002). Internet plagiarism among college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 43(3), 374–385.
- Schneiders, S. M. (1989). Spirituality in the academy. *Theological Studies*, 50(4), 676–697. doi:10.1177/004056398905000403
- Sheikhinejad, F., & Ahmadi, G. (2008). Management in the light of spirituality. *Tabdir Journal*, 202, 49–53.
- Sledge, S., Miles, A., & Van Sambeek, M. F. (2011). A comparison of employee job satisfaction in the service industry: Do cultural and spirituality influences matter? *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, 12(4), 126–145.
- Soltani, I., & Joneghani, R. B. (2012). Operational model of cascading values and professional ethics in organization: A context for spiritual development of employees. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 7(18), 130–140. doi:10.5539/ijbm.v7n18p130
- Stamm, L. (2003). Can we bring spirituality back to campus? Higher education's re-engagement with values and spirituality. *Journal of College and Character*, 4(5), 1–11. doi:10.2202/1940-1639.1354
- Stone, T. H., Jawahar, I. M., & Kisamore, J. L. (2009). Using the theory of planned behavior and cheating justifications to predict academic misconduct. *Career Development International*, 14(3), 221–241. doi:10.1108/13620430910966415

- Stuber-McEwen, D., Wiseley, P., & Hoggatt, S. (2009). Point, click, and cheat: Frequency and type of academic dishonesty in the virtual classroom. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 12*(3).
- Sutton, E. M., & Huba, M. E. (1995). Undergraduate student perceptions of academic dishonesty as a function of ethnicity and religious participation. *NASPA Journal, 33*(1), 19–34.
- Tang, T. L. P. (2012). Detecting honest people's lies in handwriting: The power of the Ten Commandments and internalized ethical values. *Journal of Business Ethics, 106*(4), 389–400. doi:10.1007/s10551-011-1015-6
- Tang, T. L. P., & Tang, T. L. N. (2010). Finding the lost sheep: A panel study of business students' intrinsic religiosity, Machiavellianism, and unethical behavior intentions. *Ethics & Behavior, 20*(5), 352–379. doi:10.1080/10508422.2010.491763
- Underwood, J., & Szabo, A. (2003). Academic offences and e-learning: Individual propensities in cheating. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 34*(4), 467–477. doi:10.1111/bjet.2003.34.issue-4
- Watson, G., & Sottile, J. (2010). Cheating in the digital age: Do students cheat more in online courses? *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 13*(1).
- Wattles, J. (1987). Levels of meaning in the Golden Rule. *The Journal of Religious Ethics, 15*, 106–129.
- Weaver, G., & Agle, B. (2002). Religiosity and ethical behavior in organizations: A symbolic interactionist perspective. *Academy of Management Review, 27*(1), 77–97.