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Lots of pants on fire

Study of students finds cheating common

The days of honesty in business and politics left ages ago. Now it seems even

Oliver North can lie to Congress and become a folk hero. It doesn't matter if Pinocchio's nose grows anymore. So long as his deception goes unnoticed and unpunished, the world remains status quo.

With lies and cheating commonplace in the world, the niche of university life holds no antidote to cheating. A recent New York Times magazine article examined the problem of cheating within the nation's school systems, quoting some people associated with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

One UNL psychology professor, Richard Dienstbier, quoted in the New York Times article, said he and his colleagues are noticing a "higher percentage of classroom cheating."

A study by the University of California at Los Angeles echoes Dienstbier's observations. The study of 290,000 college freshmen discovered 30.4 percent of the freshman class had cheated on a test in their last year of high school. Contrast this with a 1966 study that found 20.6 percent admitted to cheating.

A spokesman for the UNL chancellor's office said the of-

fice has not received any complaint of a rise in academic dishonesty.

Although studies such as UCLA's give an idea of the proportions of the cheating problem, exact numbers are difficult to find. Finding out how many students cheat is about as easy as finding the needles in a stack of hay. Everyone knows the needles exist, yet finding them is the real problem.

Even college newspapers recognize cheating in college as a noticeable problem. Last fall Dartmouth College's campus paper devoted an entire issue to the growing problem of college cheating.

Experts disagree on the causes or solutions of cheating in the classroom. Some argue that a lackadaisical attitude to life spurs cheating. Others believe the pressure of the yuppie generation forces people to cheat to succeed.

But the problem doesn't start or finish in college. The problem with cheating starts earlier — maybe with parents cheating on expenses, lying to friends and fudging on income-tax returns. And the problem probably will continue past any college exam. Yet cheating is cheating, and like fool's gold, it looks good to begin with, but in the end the only loser is the cheat.



Strength vs. goodness

This year's presidential choices offer neither

When Jesse Jackson spoke on campus last year, he ended with the very stirring and challenging words: "It is not enough that we be a strong nation; we must be a good nation."

This dichotomy struck a chord with me. It helped me to sort out many of the supposedly conflicting or even contradictory feelings that I have had concerning national politics over the last 20 years or so.

If we cannot be both, I would prefer that we be good. If we must be strong or nothing, I would prefer that we be strong. But above all, I have desired that we be both, and there has been little opportunity for such a combination in my lifetime.

Perhaps John Kennedy was the last chance we had. There was a feeling then that the country was headed toward both strength and goodness — yea, a strength that arose naturally from just the right kind of goodness. But our dreams died on the streets of Dallas, and we ushered in the Johnson administration — the quintessential "strength at all costs" administration. The price we paid was the Vietnam War, nuclear proliferation and a tidal wave of popular protest and rebellion.

Then came Nixon. Aided by the strongest third-party bid in modern history since George Wallace, Nixon took the White House and promptly introduced reforms to get us out of Vietnam and back on the road to sanity — maybe even the road to goodness. The success of his first term was shown by his landslide re-election victory in 1972.

But then the biggest scandal in American political history broke. Nixon and his cronies gave fresh evidence for the old adage concerning power and corruption, as "Watergate" became more of a household word than "Agnew" ever was. In successive years, America experienced the resignations of a sitting vice president and a sitting president — both unprecedented events.

The Ford years followed, and America did exactly what it needed to do: nothing — more than two years of sweet, post-traumatic stress syndrome nothing. And Gerald Ford was definitely the man to lead such a game plan. Not strong. Not good. Just . . . nothing. Saigon fell, and we did nothing. John Wooden retired from the University of California at Los Angeles, and we did nothing. Blank stares, slow healing, nothing.

Then in 1976, we sensed the need

to move again. Apathy can be addictive, and a Southerner named "Jimmy" warned us that we must break out now and elect "Leaders, For a Change."

By the skin of our teeth, we voted to resume the quest for goodness. We elected a good man — a very good man. And we sought to become good ourselves.

James
Sennett



But Carter may have proved once and for all that a good person cannot succeed as president. I think history will show that a large reason for the disaster of the Carter administration was, ironically, his basic goodness.

Carter honestly believed one could be president and still choose to examine issues closely, treat people fairly and try to get the best result for everyone involved.

The image such philosophy delivered to the American people, however, was weak, indecisive, wishy-washy failure. The Iran hostage crisis destroyed an already beleaguered president, and all he was trying to do was be a good person and create a good nation.

So we elected Reagan. In 1980 there was very little call for goodness and strength. There was only a call for strength. We were tired of trying to be good, tired of trying to help, tired of attempting to establish fairness and equality across the nation and the world. We just didn't want to feel weak anymore. "Let's make America great again!" Law and order. We're No. 1. Look out, world, the bitch is back.

Jackson's quotation helped me realize, in retrospect, that I voted for each of the three options alluded to above in the three presidential elections in which I have cast my ballot.

I voted for Jimmy Carter — twice. To this day I am not ashamed of it. I voted for Carter the first time because I thought he could make us good again and strong again. I really thought his vision of government with integrity could work. I guess I was just as deluded by the short-lived post-Watergate morality as anyone.

By 1980, I was convinced Carter

would never make us strong again. But still I believed his programs represented the only viable option for goodness in the 1980 campaign. So, I and a handful of die-hard moralists pulled the "James Earl" lever and were buried under an avalanche of resurgent saber-rattling. In 1980 I had a choice: I could vote for goodness, or I could vote for strength. I could not do both. I unhesitatingly chose goodness.

Then, in 1984, I did something that I am not proud of. I closed my eyes, I clenched my teeth and I voted for Reagan. I did so because I saw no goodness option. The outmoded special-interest rhetoric of the Mondale campaign was the way to chaos and retrenchment, not goodness. I had no choice in 1984. It was strength or nothing, and I reluctantly chose strength.

My fear for 1988 is that I will not even have that choice. We are down to five people. Realistically, only three. For all intents and purposes, the big two. The election in November will be between George Bush and Michael Dukakis. I see no chance for strength or goodness on either side. I will be forced to choose between shallow leftovers of an already aging era in American history and a facade of progressiveness that hides a staunch refusal to admit that America will never again be as it was at the height of the New Deal.

We had our chance. We had the chance to continue the power trip — Bob Dole could do it for us in spades. We even had chances for goodness, represented perhaps best of all in Jackson. But he will not be nominated. The colorblind, affirmative-action Democratic machine will see to that. So there will be neither goodness nor strength before us. There will simply be . . . nothing. In 1974 we needed that. In 1989 it may destroy us.

My only hope is that futurologist John Naisbit is right, and it really doesn't matter who is in the White House anymore. Naisbit holds that the real political power of the future is in state and local governments and that the federal level is slowly receding into the traditional role of defense provision. I can think of no greater boost to such a movement than the options we have this year.

Sennett is a graduate student in philosophy and campus minister with College-Career Christian Fellowship.

Letters

State senator says joke issue in the DN extremely offensive

Your so-called "spoof" in the Daily Nebraskan on April 1 is extremely offensive from my point of view. It appalls me to think our potential future journalists have sunk to such a low in the name of spoofing. It seems obvious they were uncomfortable too, or they would not have used pseudonyms. To print such material in the name of humor indicates to me that the apparent attempt at spoofing has reached a new low.

It would seem to me that the aim of high journalistic endeavor should attempt to uplift and strive for objective communication, true entertainment and enlightenment. I fail to see what your issue can possibly do to

attain any such responsible journalism.

Worst of all perhaps is the effect on potential students who may be considering the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for the future. Although it may not be "news" to pre-college students, it is certainly not raising up any ideals and values of a college education.

I truly hope someday these so-called writers will look back and wonder why they ever let their minds spend their valuable education time in such a wasteful manner.

Roger Wehrbein
state senator

Student says UNL chancellor should resign from position

In a story in the April 12 Daily Nebraskan, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Chancellor Martin Massengale said he thought the findings of the New York Times survey were positive and that he was not disappointed by an average rating for UNL.

If Massengale really feels this way, then we as students should be disappointed with him and ask for his resignation. We hear stories every day that say America is no longer No. 1.

This attitude coming from a university chancellor may be an underly-

ing reason. Whatever happened to the push for excellence? Are we satisfied with violations at corruption we see in federal government? I think not. It's quite evident that Massengale has accomplished his goals here and should move aside for someone with fresh ideas and drive. We want to be known for something other than great in the social category. What about science, teaching and art?

Robert E. Summers
freshman
undeclared