In Review - Being – With, or Without, Thinking: The Case of Online Behavior in Higher Education

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The higher education topography has changed significantly over the centuries. In recent times, hallowed halls have given way to digital corridors. Grandiose brick and mortar libraries filled with the sweet smell of books, generations of anxiety, and decades of coffee have been replaced with the hum of MacBooks and the illuminated faces of seemingly technology native Millennials engrossed in online learning as well as online social networking. Although the scenery may be changing, one aspect that has not changed is the fact that institutions of higher education are still the pivotal precipice for growth and identity development among young adults.

That identity development now includes a constantly changing world of online identity integration that must be addressed and reflected upon to address student’s behaviors, including misbehaviors, in higher education. In *Misbehavior Online in Higher Education* (Wankel & Wankel, 2012), the authors provide a platform for exploring the myriad of opportunities for misconduct to arise in the higher education arena through a series of varying lenses. The collection of essays and articles provides guidance for student affairs administrators and policy makers, as well as direction for faculty to address misbehaviors in online environments.

Increased social and academic pressures, and how higher education responds to these increases, are addressed in several chapters. In chapter 3, “Say That to My Face,” Barbara Ritter examines the nature of disembodiment in online environments and suggests that individuals seek to categorize online experiences with preexisting socially constructed face-to-face experiences (p. 27). Unfortunately, these face-to-face experiences often include learned racial prejudice, gender bias and gender roles, as well as culture and class stigmatization. Several contributors suggest that the anonymity of
online environments may allow online users to engage in misbehaviors without fear of accountability.

Anonymity online and harassment (particularly cyberbullying) are discussed in several chapters, while other chapters focus on social media, photo sharing, first amendment rights, and academic integrity issues including plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, and misrepresentation. Central to each chapter is the theme that higher education cannot operate without consideration to the social and academic arenas of online environments. Policies and expectations of student online behavior must be addressed before problems occur. Higher education can no longer be reactive to the presence of students in virtual environments. Just as academic policies and procedures exist to inform and protect students, faculty, and staff in physical spaces so should policies exist to inform and protect students, faculty, and staff in virtual spaces to reduce misbehavior.

In this volume, the authors have collected relevant and “hot” topics for easy access and reference. The volume should be looked at as a collection rather than a series of interlocking chapters. Nevertheless, higher education administrators, faculty, staff, and students should explore *Misbehavior Online in Higher Education* as a starting point for discussions both inside and outside of the classroom. Areas of discussion not covered in the volume include hacking, spamming, registration bots, and defamation to name a few. Comparatively, any resource or discussion of online environments will change rapidly and the chapters should not be viewed as final but rather as a foundation for discussion and continual exploration.