

like a Coke or a pencil. Would it give us insight into the cheating process? We weren't sure, but it seemed reasonable; and so, a few years ago, we gave it a try.

This is what happened. As the students at one of the MIT cafeterias finished their lunches, we interrupted them to ask whether they would like to participate in a five-minute experiment. All they had to do, we explained, was solve 20 simple math problems (finding two numbers that added up to 10). And for this they would get 50 cents per correct answer.

The experiment began similarly in each case, but ended in one of three different ways. When the participants in the first group finished their tests, they took their worksheets up to the experimenter, who tallied their correct answers and paid them 50 cents for each. The participants in the second group were told to tear up their worksheets, stuff the scraps into their pockets or backpacks, and simply tell the experimenter their score in exchange for payment. So far this experiment was similar to the tests of honesty described in the previous chapter.

But the participants in the last group had something significantly different in their instructions. We told them, as we had told the previous group, to tear up the worksheets and simply tell the experimenter how many questions they had answered correctly. But this time, the experimenter wouldn't be giving them cash. Rather, she would give them a token for each question they claimed to have solved. The students would then walk 12 feet across the room to another experimenter, who would exchange each token for 50 cents.

Do you see what we were doing? Would the insertion of a token into the transaction—a piece of valueless, nonmonetary currency—affect the students' honesty? Would the token make the students less honest in tallying their answers