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Differences in Perceptions of Cheating Between College Students and Professors

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Literature Review

- Previous research found that cheating behavior is common in educational settings (e.g., McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2000; Josien & Broderick, 2013).
- Prior research indicate social influences as the best predictors for cheating.
 - Having friends who cheat and observing cheating behavior is highly correlated with one's own cheating behavior. (McCabe & Trevino, 1997; Rettinger & Kramer, 2009).
- Prior research also indicated that there might be a discrepancy between students' and professors' expectations on how to deal with cheating behavior.
 - Students are unlikely to report cheating behavior and believe that professors need to effectively communicate and enforce the consequences of cheating behavior (Hendricks et al., 2011).

Research Question & Hypotheses

Would professors and students who have cheated in the past have different perceptions and beliefs about cheating, views of cheating severity, and punishment/prevention of cheating?

Hypotheses:

- 1) Professors' and students' perceptions on the severity of cheating would be different.
- 2) Students who have cheated before would estimate the percentage of cheating higher than those who didn't.
- 3) Professors who have cheated before would estimate the percentage of cheating higher than those who didn't.

Method

- Participants:
 - Students and faculty members of a private Christian university
 - 434 Students (39.2% (170) male, & 60.8% (264) female)
 - Mean Age = 19.78 (18-24)
 - 34% Freshmen, 25% Sophomore, 41% Upperclassmen
 - 42 Professors (42.9% (8) male & 57.1% (24) female)
 - 25 different areas of teaching
 - Mean age = 51.22 (30-78), Mean years of experience = 17.29 (1-53)
- Procedure:
 - A campus wide email was sent out to students and faculty members which contained two different surveys (one for each group).
- Surveys:
 - **Severity of cheating**
 - Questions asked participants to rate the severity of 25 behaviors which elicited some form of academic dishonesty pertaining 3 groups: behaviors related to test or plagiarism, related to homework, and ambiguous behaviors eliciting academic dishonesty yet hard to identify. (1-5 scale)
 - **Perceived percentage of cheating**
 - Participants indicated their perceived percentage (1-100 scale) of cheating behavior in 6 different scenarios:
 - 1) General Education Courses
 - 2) Major Required Courses
 - 3) In Cedarville University
 - 4) In Other Secular Universities
 - 5) In Their Peer Groups
 - 6) Overall percentage of people who cheat
 - **Self-Report of cheating**
 - Asked participants to indicate past cheating behavior

Results

1) Self-Report of Cheating:

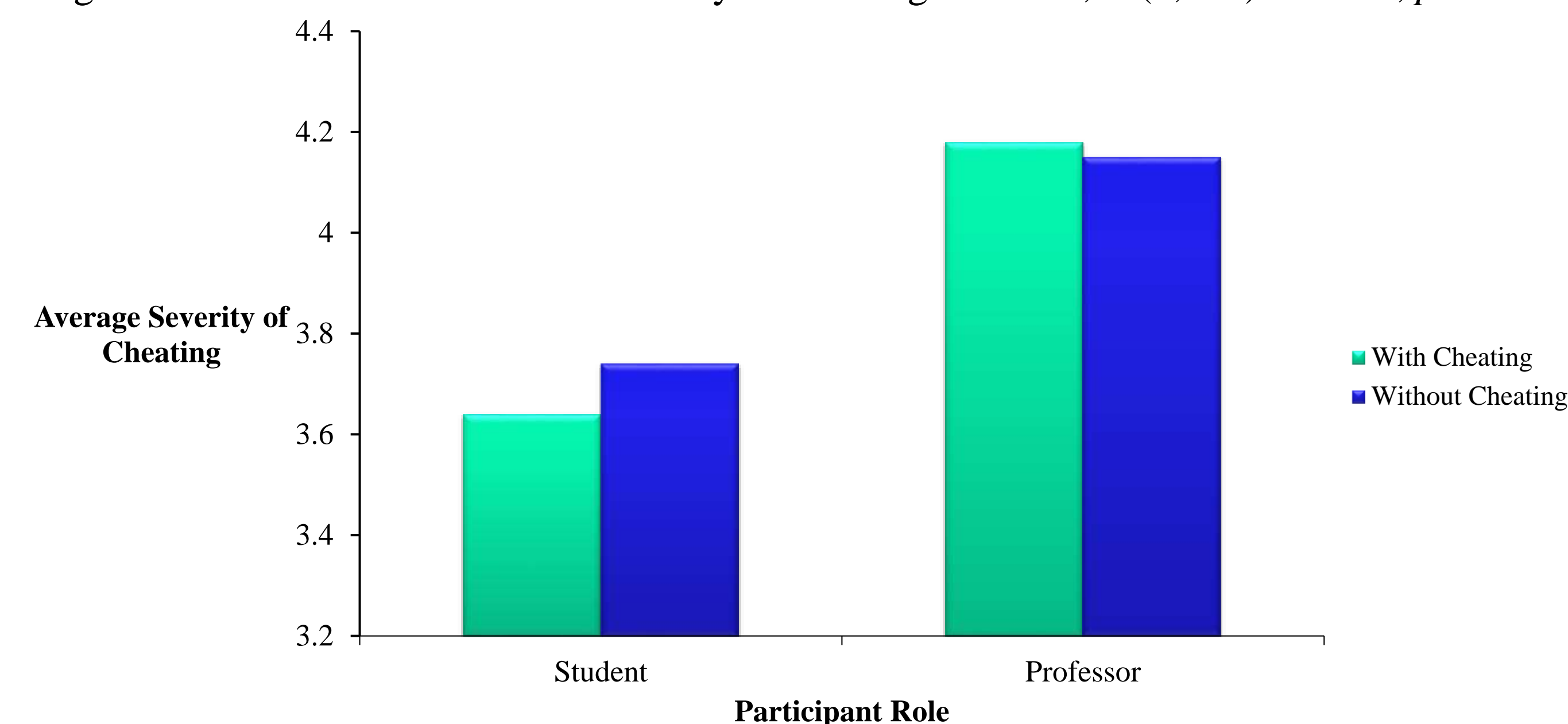
- No significant differences between the percentage of students and professors who self-reported having cheated in college. (37.1% students, 35.7% professors)

2) Main Analyses:

- Analyses focused on the effect of participant role (professor/student) and past cheating behavior (with/without) on 2 major aspects of cheating behavior:

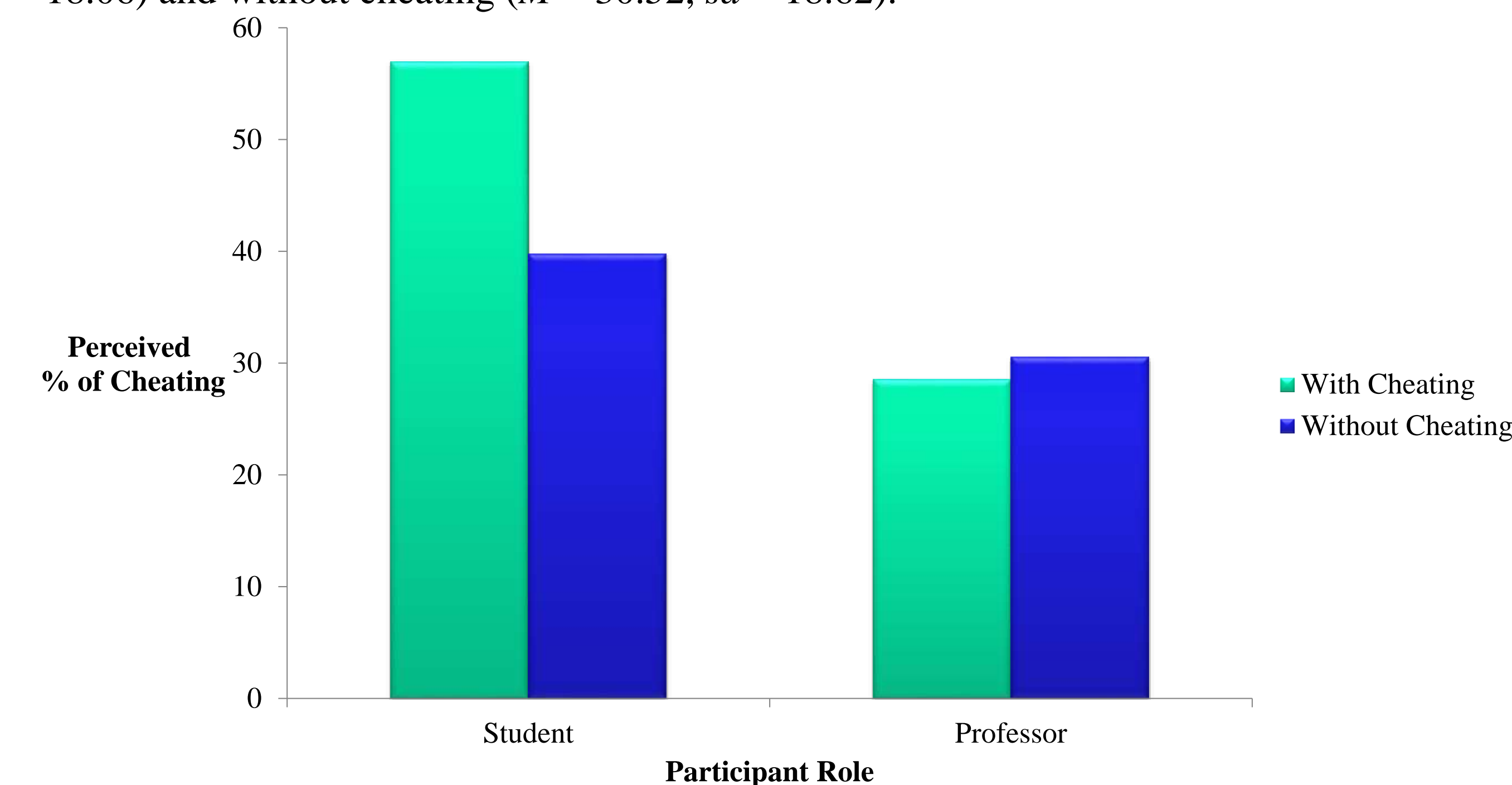
1) Severity of Cheating:

- A two-way ANOVA with participant role (students/professors) and past cheating behavior (with/without) as between-subjects factors was conducted to examine the difference on the overall severity. No significant interactions and main effect of past cheating behavior were found. However, students ($M = 3.70$, $sd = .57$) and professors ($M = 4.16$, $sd = .51$) were found to have significant different views on the severity of cheating behavior, $F(1,476) = 24.18$, $p = .000$.



2) Perceived Percentage of Cheating:

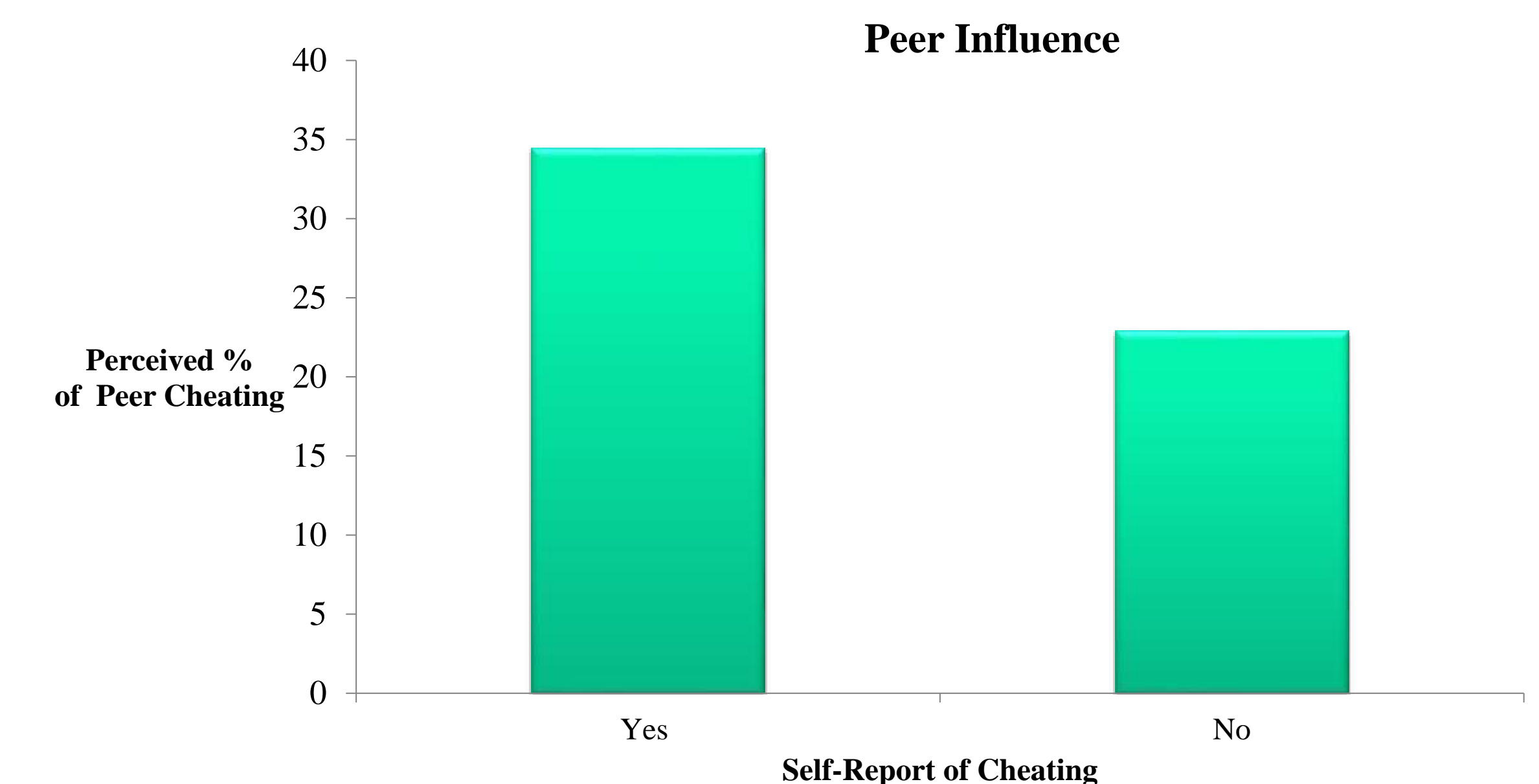
- A two-way ANOVA with participant role and past cheating behavior as between-subjects factors was conducted to examine the differences on the perceived percentage of cheating behavior. A significant interaction ($F(1,469) = 6.45$, $p = .011$), and two main effects of the participant role ($F(1,469) = 24.78$, $p = .000$) and past cheating behavior were significant ($F(1,469) = 4.06$, $p = .045$).
- Post hoc t-tests indicated that students with cheating estimated higher percentage of cheating in general ($M = 56.98$, $sd = 25.17$) than students without cheating ($M = 39.75$, $sd = 21.23$), $t(429) = 7.61$, $p = .000$. , but there was no significant different between professors with ($M = 28.53$, $sd = 18.06$) and without cheating ($M = 30.52$, $sd = 18.62$).



Results (continued)

3) Effect of Social Influence:

- Participants who reported past cheating behavior perceived a significantly higher percentage of cheating in their peer groups $t(429) = 5.144$, $p = .000$.



Conclusions

In summary,

- 1) Students' and professors' perceptions on the severity of cheating were different.
- 2) Students with cheating estimated more percentage of cheating behavior in general.
- 3) Professors' opinions on cheating had no differences despite having cheated before.

Limitations

- The sample was based on a self-selected sample. Only participants who opened our initial email and were willing to take our survey participated in the study. Most participants were Caucasian and of a similar religion and worldview.
- Our survey questions attempted to be objective but wording may have been confusing and guiding at times.
- Due to recent incidents involving disciplining student cheating behavior, participants responses may have been dishonest.

References

- Hendricks, E., Young-Jones, A., & Foutch, J. (2011). To cheat or not to cheat: Academic dishonesty in the college classroom. *LOGOS: A Journal Of Undergraduate Research*, 468-75.
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