Apr 20th, 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Differences in Perceptions of Cheating Between College Students and Professors

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Chuang, Ying-Ruey; Voss, Andrew; and Wu, Di, "Differences in Perceptions of Cheating Between College Students and Professors" (2016). *The Research and Scholarship Symposium*. 37.

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Literature Review

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).

Perceived 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 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

Research Question & Hypotheses

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 = 1.70, sd = .57) and professors (M = 1.46, 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 (students/professors) and past cheating behavior (with/without) 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) = 4.08, 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).

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.

Conclusions

References