

# Faculty and Student Perceptions of Cheating

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Why do students cheat in examinations? The reasons vary; but a recurrent complaint, really a justification, is that the world puts too high a premium on "success." In the present society, success is its own excuse for being the alpha and omega of life, the crown and consummation of all striving.

Another equally important reason for cheating is the competitive pressure that prevails in college, the undue emphasis placed on marks. Since it is the only way he knows in order to survive, the student falls back upon the "art" (as students call it) of cheating. Others maintain that the impersonal atmosphere found in colleges with large enrolment and overcrowded classes intensifies the impulse to cheat. Indeed, teachers themselves are held partly responsible for this flourish-

ing practice. Instead of getting to know their students individually and judging them in the light of a full term's work, they base their final mark entirely on one or two examinations. In other words, one must learn to survive in this academic rat race; one must master the difficult and complex art of getting ahead. As for moral values, students who cheat may feel unhappy and their self-respect may be impaired but the temptation, unfortunately, is sometimes too strong to resist.

Only the more mature students, perhaps, would maintain that it is not the grade received but the positive benefits derived from education that matters most; that cheating is not worth the damage that may be done to one's self-esteem. A few are aware that cheating does not pay, for in the end, the cheater

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cheats himself.

Students clamor for change; they desire to change conditions and corrupt practices. If the movement for a higher standard of ethical behavior in college is to make any appreciable headway, it must find its dedicated leaders not only among teachers and administrators but also among the student body. It is time for them to grow up and accept responsibility for their actions. A new tradition, one based on honesty and honor and self-respect, can be established that each generation of college students will be proud to perpetuate.

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

The purposes of this investigation were: (1) to study a selected group of faculty members and undergraduate students at Central Philippine University with respect to their perceptions of cheating; (2) to determine the similarities and differences of agreement of non-cheating behavior; and (3) to determine whether or not there exists a difference between faculty and student perceptions of cheating.

This study attempted to answer the following problems: (1) What behavior situations of cheating were perceived in a different manner by

both groups? (3) Do both groups perceive cheating in the same way? (4) If not, was the difference in agreement statistically significant? If so, how significant is the difference?

From the study, the investigator tested the hypothesis that there is no difference in perceptions of cheating between faculty and students.

### METHODOLOGY

In this study the normative-survey method of educational research was used. The main instrument devised was a questionnaire in the form of a checklist. Before devising the instrument, a preliminary survey of cheating practices in school was made. Many of the practices of cheating cited by the students and teachers were pretty much the same with those listed in the Anderson instrument for determining student's perception of cheating. Revisions were made of the instrument to suit Philippine situations and the Likert four-point scale was adopted. Hence, the questionnaire was constructed on the basis of the students' and teachers' responses gathered during the interview and the Anderson list of 28 behavior situations. The finished question-

naire consisted of two sections, one on personal information and the other on described behavior situations of varying degrees from non-cheating to cheating practices. The respondents were asked to decide on each of the 28 behavior situations on a four-point scale with responses ranging from "Agree Very Much" (4), "Agree a Little" (3), "Disagree a Little" (2), and to "Disagree Very Much" (1). The number after each is the weight given to each category. Their determination as to which response to select for each situation was designed to be a function of their own perception to-

ward the desirability and appropriateness of each contrived situation of non-cheating or cheating.

The behavior situations described ranged in varying degrees from non-cheating to cheating. Each respondent was asked how he personally perceived and felt about each behavior. After each behavior situation, the respondent was asked to check on the respective column his degree of agreement or disagreement for the particular behavior. There are four categories in the four-point scale with assigned weights and interpretation such as the following:

WEIGHT	CATEGORY	INTERPRETATION
4	AGREE VERY MUCH	If you think and feel that the behavior of the college student(s) described is desirable and appropriate.
3	AGREE A LITTLE	If you think the behavior described has some degree of desirability and appropriateness.
2	DISAGREE A LITTLE	If you object to the behavior described with some degree of seriousness.
1	DISAGREE VERY MUCH	If you think the behavior described is seriously objectionable.

Ten copies of the questionnaire were tried out with a few students and teachers before they were administered to a large group. Examination and analysis of their responses showed that they clearly understood the questionnaire, hence, this would work with a large group.

Eighty-five (85) per cent of the entire population (100) of the college full-time faculty were involved in the survey. Thirty-five or 41.18 per cent were men and fifty or 58.82 per cent were women. The figures show a preponderance of women faculty. Forty-three or 50.59 per cent were married, forty or 47.06 per cent were single, and two or 2.35 per cent of the eighty-five faculty members were widows. Most of those who participated in the survey were married. The age groups show that thirty-four or 40 per cent of the faculty fall within the ages between 20 to 29 years. The average age was found to be 37.29 years. The teaching experience of almost half of the faculty fall within the range of zero to nine years. The average length of teaching experience is 10.32 years.

Almost 50 per cent of the college faculty belong to the College of Arts and Sciences. This college has

eight departments and offers preparatory curricula as well as professional and technical courses which account for a big number of teachers. Of the eighty-five college faculty, fourteen or 16.47 per cent belong to the College of Education. Other colleges have few because of no departmentalization.

As to educational qualifications, forty-seven or 55.29 per cent are holders of a bachelor's degree; thirty-six or 42.35 per cent are master's degree holders, and two or 2.35 per cent have doctorate degrees.

A total of 217 students participated in the survey. Sixty-nine or 31.3 per cent are male and one hundred forty-eight or 62.2 per cent are female, with a preponderance of women students. The ages of respondents ranged from 15 to 33 years old. About one hundred eighty-six or 85.71 per cent of the student respondents have been continuing regularly in their studies. Twenty-seven or 12.44 per cent of the 217 students belong to the age range between 22 and 28 years. To this group belong some students who quit school and have returned, those part-time or working students, and those who are not serious about their studies and have not progressed

regularly in their academic performance. The average age of the student respondents was 19 years.

As to classification by curricular year, the survey revealed that sixty-five or 29.95 per cent are in the first year; fifty-two or 23.90 per cent in the second year; forty-eight or 22.12 per cent, third year; forty or 18.43 per cent, fourth year; and twelve or 5.53 per cent, fifth year.

The student respondents were asked the course they were pursuing at the University as part of the general information of the survey. Bachelor of Science in Nursing seemed to be the most attractive course among the courses offered. It is a five-year course and the first two years constitute the preparatory course known as the Pre-Nursing. By the end of the first year rigid screening begins. Students are screened as to scholastic ability, personality, moral character, and other considerations which the college deems wise. Intelligence, aptitude, and ability tests are given after the second semester of the first year. At the end of the second year only the top students, approximately from 80 to 100 out of 500 or more students are admitted to the third

year of the College of Nursing at the University. Those who do not qualify at the college apply at other schools or colleges of Nursing here and abroad.

Next to the nursing course comes the Bachelor of Science in Commerce. The third in rank is the College of Arts and Sciences. Agriculture and Engineering are the colleges where the respondents ranked closely. The least attractive course is teaching.

Section B of the questionnaire contained 28 items which are described behavior situations which ranged in varying degrees from non-cheating to cheating. Table VI shows the total score comparison of the faculty and student groups. University faculty responses ranged from a low of 38 to a high of 91. This difference is demonstrated further by comparing the faculty group's total mean score of 48.50 and a standard deviation of 5.32 to the student group's total mean score of 56.18 and a standard deviation of 10.70. The obtained critical ratio is 8.26. The faculty and students differ in their perceptions of cheating and this difference is significant at the one per cent level.

TABLE I  
Comparison of Faculty and Student Perceptions of Cheating

Respondents	: Number of Cases	: Range of Scores	: Mean	: S. D.	: C. R.	: Signifi- cance
Faculty	: 85	: 38-75	:48-50:	5.32:	8.26:	0.01
Students	: 217	: 33-91	: 56.18:	10.71:	:	

TABLE II  
Mean Scores of Described Behavior on Cheating Questionnaire by Faculty and Students

Corresponding item in checklist	: Faculty ; Mean Score	: Behavior Described in Item	: Student ; Mean Score
15	: 3.79	: Studying with classmates before the examination	: 3.48
28	: 3.78	: Hiring an Engineering fraternity student to tutor in Math	: 3.56
27	: 3.71	: Staying after the class to clarify some parts of the lesson with the teacher	: 3.62
19	: 3.12	: Requesting the teacher for further explanation on problem not clearly understood	: 3.33
25	: 2.95	: Asking a new instructor the type of test to be used in an examination	: 2.72
12	: 2.84	: Reviewing old test given by a friend in readying herself for an examination	:
2	: 2.34	: Getting help from a friend who had completed the course on the kind of questions usually asked	: 2.18

24	: 1.94	: Telling the instructor after the last	: 2.07
	:	: class meeting she enjoyed the	:
	:	: course (feeling it might help her	:
	:	: grade)	:
10	: 1.49	: Using the same term paper for two	: 2.25
	:	: courses	:
4	: 1.47	: Writing down formulae on the desk	: 2.02
	:	: when she first entered the room	:
	:	: so she would not forget	:
26	: 1.40	: Asking a friend who had just com-	: 1.83
	:	: pleted a test previous hour about	:
	:	: questions asked	:
16	: 1.27	: Looking at a neighbor's paper during	1.53
	:	: examination	:
18	: 1.27	: Hiring an English major to write a	: 1.72
	:	: term paper	:
3	: 1.24	: Getting information about an exam-	: 1.53
	:	: ination from a friend who is a	:
	:	: secretary	:
9	: 1.22	: Helping another student who is hav-	: 1.91
	:	: ing trouble during an examination:	:
17	: 1.21	: Borrowing a boardmate's term paper	: 1.61
	:	: and turning it in after a few	:
	:	: minor changes	:
7	: 1.20	: Going thru waste can and finding a	: 1.61
	:	: copy of the test	:
13	: 1.18	: Using notes written on palm of her	: 1.32
	:	: hand during examination	:
8	: 1.16	: Nudging a neighbor and asking for	: 1.61
	:	: answers during examination	:
20	: 1.15	: Making signs with fingers during	: 1.67
	:	: examination to communicate	:
	:	: with friends on correct answers.	:
21	: 1.15	: Looking at the textbook while in-	: 1.61
	:	: structor writes questions on the	:
	:	: blackboard	:

1	:	1.09	:	Putting notes on adhesive tape on	:	1.24
	:		:	inside of skirt hem	:	
14	:	1.08	:	Opening a notebook when instructor	:	1.17
	:		:	is not looking	:	
22	:	1.08	:	Leaving the room during examina-	:	1.39
	:		:	tion to check notes in men's room	:	
5	:	1.05	:	Looking at kleenex with notes on it	:	1.28
6	:	1.04	:	Making use of notes on scroll of ad-	:	1.32
	:		:	ding machine tape during an	:	
	:		:	examination	:	
23	:	1.02	:	Paying a mimeographer to get a	:	1.18
	:		:	copy of final examination	:	
11	:	1.0	:	Paying a friend to take the final	:	1.28
	:		:	examination for him in a large	:	
	:		:	class	:	

## FINDINGS

The specific differences between faculty and students' perceptions of cheating were studied. Both faculty and student groups classified behavior items No. 28, Staying after class to clarify some parts of the lesson with the teacher, and No. 27, Hiring an Engineering fraternity student to tutor in Math, under the same category, "Agree Very Much." These behavior perceptions were perceived as desirable and appropriate ways of behaving rather than forms of cheating by both groups. The faculty thought that there is nothing wrong with studying with classmates prior to the examination, but the students perceived it with some degree of desirability and ap-

propriateness. They agreed a little with this behavior situation.

Under category "Agree a Little," both groups perceived that behavior situations No. 19, Requesting the teacher for further explanation on problem not clearly understood; No. 12, Reviewing old tests given by a friend in readying herself for an examination; and No. 25, Asking a new instructor the tupe of test to be used in an examination, possessed some degree of desirability and appropriateness. Some teachers think that explaining further may be giving a hint on the solution of the problems, hence, they refuse to do this during the examination period.

There were only two behavior situations which the faculty ob-



jected to with some degree of seriousness. Behavior situations No. 2, Getting help from a friend who had completed the course on the kind of questions usually asked, and No. 24, Telling the instructor after the class meeting she enjoyed the course (feeling it might help her grade) were categorized as "Disagree a Little." The student group perceived the two behavior situations in the same way.

Of the 28 behavior items listed, fourteen or 50 per cent of the students objected to the behaviors were sometimes desirable and at other times may be serious. This may imply that they are perceived as minor cheating practices which, when caught in the act by the teachers, could easily be excused. They were not as serious as those classified under the last category, "Disagree Very Much."

The findings revealed some interesting comments from both faculty and students. For instance, behavior item No. 4, Writing down formulae on desk as she entered the room so that she would not forget, was classified by most students under category "Disagree a little," but was labeled seriously objectionable by fifty-nine or sixty-nine per cent of the 85 faculty members. Twelve or 14 per cent agreed a little

which means that the behavior has some degree of desirability and appropriateness. This was supported by some verbal and written comments expressed by some teachers.

An interesting comment which revealed the student respondents' perception of cheating was one written on behavior item No. 17, Borrowing a boardmate's term paper and turning it in after a few minor changes. The student wrote, "Making few changes — at least you have done something." She marked the behavior situation, "Agree Very Much." This implies that to her, making a few changes on somebody's paper and turning it in for credit may not be actual copying or cheating. Five students thought that this behavior was desirable and appropriate. Perhaps they may be justified in their perceptions because nobody can be exactly original in the literal sense of the word.

Of the 28 behavior situations 20 of these or 71 per cent were perceived by the faculty as seriously objectionable. They were more severe in labeling the behavior "Disagree Very Much" than were the students. This suggests that most of the faculty members manifested a rigid and strict climate during examinations. Behavior item No. 11, Paying a friend to take the final

examination for him in a large class, was condemned entirely by all faculty members. One hundred and seventy-seven or 82 per cent of the 217 students disagreed very much with the behavior. Twenty-three or 10.59 per cent disagreed a little, and fourteen or 6.45 per cent agreed a little. Three students agreed very much with the behavior. Two were taking Pre-Nursing and one was pursuing Agriculture. In any item, difference in perception could be expected because of the diversity of family backgrounds of students. At any rate, the percentage was negligible. Majority of the students condemned the behavior, hence, this was considered seriously objectionable.

At the extreme end of the scale there is a group of behaviors which received such low mean scores as to indicate they were considered highly objectionable by most students. Of the 28 behavior situations about one-third or eight were labeled "Disagree Very Much" by the students. These include such behavior items as No. 22, Leaving the room during examination to check one's notes at the men's room; No. 13, Using notes written on palm of hand; No. 11, Paying a friend to take the final examination; and No. 14, Opening a notebook when instructor is

not looking. All these were thought of as definitely dishonest. When these are resorted to by students they probably will result in rejection of a particular individual by his peers. Also behavior items No. 5, Looking at notes written on kleenex; No. 1, Putting notes on adhesive tape for use during examination; and No. 23, Bribing, or paying a mimeographer to get a copy of the final examination. These suggest that these are the types of situation that could be controlled by teachers and administrators.

The last two behavior items with the lowest mean scores for the students were, No. 23, Paying a mimeographer to get a final copy of a final examination and No. 14, Opening a notebook when instructor is not looking, which has the lowest mean score. More students agreed with behavior No. 23 than with No. 14. Perhaps these students thought that it was difficult to prove whether or not one has bribed the mimeographer (No. 23). It is more private and confidentially done than opening one's notes right in the examination room and taking advantage when the teacher is not looking (No. 14). Behavior item No. 14 seemed to be an opportunistic behavior which most students would not attempt for fear of being

caught and embarrassed in the presence of other students. Perhaps this explains why it has the lowest mean score.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. In general, the findings seem to indicate that the college faculty members and college students in this particular university perceive cheating differently. Statistically, this difference is significant at the 1 per cent level.

2. Differences in perceptions lie in many behavior situations which were objected to by the students with some degree of seriousness but were thought of decisively by the faculty members as seriously objectionable.

3. The faculty members generally seemed to be more severe in describing a particular behavioral act as cheating than the students.

4. Not all behavior situations are perceived as cheating.

5. Both groups seem to agree that getting help before an examination is usually desirable and appropriate, but getting assistance during the examination or by covert means is inappropriate.

6. All things considered, then, even though the statistical difference is significant, there seems to be little basic difference in the orien-

tation of the two groups toward cheating. The over-all pattern of perceiving various behavior as cheating and non-cheating seems to be quite similar and this pattern of similarity is probably more significant than the statistical difference that exists.

7. Several findings in this study confirm a similar investigation in the United States done by Frymier.

8. It seems to conclude that faculty members in this university have more strict moral values than students as revealed in their perceptions of cheating in the survey. This may be due to some reasons which are worthy of mention: (1) faculty members are mature in thinking and experience; (2) they have higher expectations; (3) they are looked upon as models of good moral character; (4) the emphasis on moral standards set by the university; and (5) similarities in religious orientation.

These conclusions and findings are confined to the present study in a particular sectarian university. The subjects may not be truly representative of the general population of college students and faculty.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Refinements of some of the behavior situations might well add

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to the utility of the instrument, such as those with comments from the faculty members.

2. An exploration of some of the more subtle aspects of cheating, also

might well lead to worthwhile results.

3. Further study of sex differences in perceptions of cheating could prove helpful.

4. Further research on a large representative sample of faculty and students from different universities is hereby recommended.