Title: To Cheat or Not to Cheat, That is the Question.

Purpose
The purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate the pressures that may influence Ferris State University (FSU) students to engage in academic dishonesty. FSU students were surveyed using an on-line survey questionnaire to assess their perceptions of relational, institutional, workload, and course specific pressures. It is important to note that the student participants were not asked if they had ever cheated, and the surveys were conducted in an anonymous manner.

Academic Dishonesty:
1) Academic Cheating is defined as: Giving, taking, or receiving information; and or
2) Using any prohibited materials; and or
3) Capitalizing on the weakness of persons, procedures or processes to gain an advantage.

Sample
The sample consisted of 252 FSU students, which included 152 female and 99 male participants (one participant did not specify a gender). The majority of the participants, 95.2%, indicated that their age was between 18-23. In regard to class, 108 participants indicated freshman, 50 indicated sophomore, 59 indicated junior, 32 indicated senior, and 3 participants indicated other. Fifty-two of the participants noted that they are honors college students. The sample included only a small percentage of athletes (7.5%) and members of a fraternity or sorority (7.1%).

Results
The results below indicate the rank order of the highest to the lowest perceived pressure within the four areas assessed in this questionnaire.

Relational Pressures
1. Parental Expectations
2. Match Success of a Friend
3. Match Expectations of a Role Model
4. Match Success of a Sibling
5. When Observing Others Cheat

Institutional Pressures
1. Gain Entrance into Medical or Graduate School
2. Gain Entrance into a Professional Program (i.e. Nursing)
3. Student Athletes
4. Students with Scholarships
5. Honor's College Students
6. Students in Fraternities
7. Students in Sororities
Workload Pressures
1. Procrastination
2. Having too Much Class Work
3. Having to Work a Job
4. Time to Maintain a Dating Relationship

Course Specific Pressures
1. Knowing a Grade for a Specific Course is Crucial
2. On-line Courses that Rely on Honor System to Prevent Cheating
3. When There is Little or No Interest in the Course

Rank Order of the Four General Categories
1. Overload
2. Institutional
3. Course Specific
4. Relational

Conclusion & Implications
The results of this exploratory study revealed differences between and amongst the relational, institutional, workload, and course specific pressures perceived to influence FSU students to engage in academic dishonesty. These results may help to guide faculty, staff and students in addressing and ultimately reducing these pressures for current and future students. The researchers believe this data could be discussed in freshman orientation courses to potentially reduce the pressures and occurrence of academic dishonesty.

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