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Cheating Isn’t the New Norm

Cheating is easier to catch than ever, and with this increase in convicted cheaters teachers and parents are growing more and more aware of its overwhelming prevalence. Using security cameras and mobile phones, it is easier than ever to have objective evidence that someone was cheating.

Before the sudden rise of the internet and later the mobile phone, cheating was mostly done by copying the answers directly off someone else. This is harder to coordinate, but if it is done right leaves next to no trace. Compare this to sending a picture of the assignment, which, while easier to do, is also easier to trace. For example, the school can track what is sent over the wifi, and there is no cell service. This makes it possible to track all of the pictures people are sending, making catching cheaters worlds easier. Even with this ability to check, when someone is caught with their phone during a test, the teacher will not even let them prove their case. They are automatically branded a cheater. The ease of peoples accusations even though we can have objective evidence is worrying, but adds to the perception of cheating as pervasive. This wealth of objective evidence is only ever used to catch cheaters, never to prove someone’s innocence.

In our modern smart phone ridden world, the problem of cheating has been seemingly amplified by the rise of social media. This apparent rise instead only shows how widespread cheating truly was to begin with. This sudden revelation has caused a shock from the teachers to the higher ups, whereas before we only had accusations and flawed witnesses to assert someone was cheating. This boost in the objectivity of cheating claims along with the perception that cheating is the new norm has led to teachers becoming more trigger-happy with their accusations of students, whether or not they have or use that objective evidence. This increase in false positives only further supports the teachers view and makes them even more suspicious of innocuous behaviour. Some teachers seem to have become paranoid of cheaters, checking everyone for phones, watches, and every other type of electronic under the sun before even considering passing out your quiz. This paranoia will not catch all of them, though, as cheating existed before cell phones. For example, I used to go to a private catholic school in which cell phones were strictly banned, with surprisingly few people going against that rule. Even though there were few to none smartphones, there was still plenty of cheating to go around. Whether through small cheat sheets or looking off of others, be assured that access to phones and social media that entails is not the cause of cheating.

While it may seem as though cheating has become the new norm, instead we are only now seeing how prevalent cheating really was. This has caused widespread paranoia and panic over cheaters, leading to overly worried teachers and higher ups. Cheating exists whether or not cell phones are in schools.