Minimizing Cheating

According to Phillip C. H. Shon (2006), whether students ultimately decide to cheat depends on 4 factors. What follows is derived from Shon’s work.*

1. **Possibility of detection**
   - What students do:
     - Note professor’s behavior patterns (including classroom habits and physical limitations)
     - Develop a sort of instructor profile before deciding to cheat
   - Strategies you can use:
     - Be aware of your own patterns of behavior—Do you circulate throughout the room? Do you allow students to ask you questions during tests/quizzes (thereby allowing you to be distracted)?
     - Recruit proctors to help you to fill surveillance gaps where you are unable to be especially vigilant.

2. **Strategies for escape**
   - What students do:
     - Tactical deployment (deliberate and strategic seating near students with knowledge, students who may be either confederates in the scheme or unwitting victims)
     - Semiotic methods (using signs to communicate during a test)—Students use strategies such as coughing or sneezing (loudly, softly, or a certain number of times), tapping pencils or knuckles, to communicate answers to others
     - Distract the professor
     - Creative smuggling—Using body parts, clothing, and other objects (e.g., pens, calculators) to smuggle notes into the exam session
   - Strategies you can use:
     - Pay attention to group dynamics in class (i.e., Who sits together?).
     - Be aware of patterns in noises and recurring student behaviors like touching one’s chin during exams.
     - Know where the ‘good’ students sit, and watch that area.
     - Be aware of (and even consider inspecting, if appropriate) items that may be hiding notes.

3. **Projection of normalcy**
   - What students do:
     - Give the impression during classes that the student is attentive, interested in learning, participatory
     - Give the impression of being “good” students in the hope of reducing suspicion at test time
   - Strategies you can use:
     - Be vigilant at all times.
     - While not being hyper-suspicious, don’t rule out the possibility that anyone might cheat.

4. **Minimization of culpability**
   - What students do:
     - Cheat in collaboration with others; Often each person has his/her own role to play.
     - This structure of cheating, often facilitated by the environment inherent in large classes, minimizes any one person’s culpability.
   - Strategies you can use:
     - Create a culture of academic integrity and demonstrate a commitment to vigilance.

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