Who’s Cheating Whom? (#)
It is sometimes said that students who take forbidden shortcuts with their homework will just end up "cheating" from doing the assignment. This assertion, too, is often accepted on faith rather than prompting us to ask just how.

Grades, however, are just the most common manifestation of a broader tendency on the part of schools to value product more than process, results more than discovery, achievement more than learning. If students are led to focus on how well they're doing more than on themselves, on their own improvement, then to believe that cheating is okay is to misunderstand the very goals of education.

Moreover, any student who offered just such a defense, perhaps arguing that her action was actually less problematic than what was happening in the larger culture of the school, would likely be developing arguments that echo those of Ross. For Ross was summarizing what a number of experiments had already shown nearly three decades ago. In 1969, Ross and his colleagues published a series of experiments exploring the psychology of cheating. In one of these experiments, for instance, he found that students were more likely to cheat on an examination when they were told that they were working in a situation where other students were cheating. And in another experiment, Ross found that students were more likely to cheat when they were told that their grades would be compared to those of other students. These findings were later confirmed by a number of other researchers, and they have been used to explain why cheating is so common in schools.

And it is precisely this observation that leads us to ask: Why is cheating so common in schools? Why do students cheat? And what can we do to prevent it from happening?

Cheating is a case in point because most discussions of the subject focus on – which is to say, attribute the problem to – students. This is because most discussions of cheating ignore the social context in which it occurs. And yet, as Ross showed, cheating is not simply a matter of personal character or personality. Instead, it is a problem that is caused by the social environment in which it occurs. This is the answer to the question of why cheating is so common in schools.

This unsettling possibility enjoys a prima facie plausibility because there are plenty of other things we regard as facts about the world that are not. One thing that is certain is that cheating is not simply a matter of personal character or personality. Instead, it is a problem that is caused by the social environment in which it occurs. This is the answer to the question of why cheating is so common in schools.

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The problem, however, is that, aside from the occasional sanctioned group project, the default condition in most American schools is competition. And yet, as Ross showed, cheating is not simply a matter of personal character or personality. Instead, it is a problem that is caused by the social environment in which it occurs. This is the answer to the question of why cheating is so common in schools.

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Therefore, we must pay attention to the social context in which cheating occurs. And yet, as Ross showed, cheating is not simply a matter of personal character or personality. Instead, it is a problem that is caused by the social environment in which it occurs. This is the answer to the question of why cheating is so common in schools.

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