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THE EFFICACY OF POLICY STATEMENTS ON PLAGIARISM: Do They Change Students' Views?

Verity J. Brown and Mark E. Howell

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Concern about academic dishonesty has led to studies designed to explore its nature, prevalence, and causes. Nevertheless, to date there has been little empirical work designed to test the efficacy of measures to reduce cheating behavior. Many authors agree that there should be institutional statements about academic dishonesty that give definitions and state the penalties for cheating. The purpose of this study was to examine the efficacy of such statements in terms of their influence on perceived severity and perceived incidence of plagiarism in undergraduates. We found that having the students read a carefully worded statement about plagiarism was an effective way to change the perceptions of how seriously plagiarism breaches academic guidelines. Our data further suggest that providing guidance about avoiding plagiarism that encourages students to take a more serious view of the issue is likely to have positive effects on future behavior.

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KEY WORDS: plagiarism; cheating; dishonesty; copying.

INTRODUCTION

It is well recognized that cheating and, in particular, plagiarism is not a modern problem but has been evident throughout the history of academic pursuit (Mallon, 1989). However, the issue of academic dishonesty is currently being widely debated in part because there has been evidence for some time that the incidence of cheating is increasing (for review, see Davis, Grover, Becker, and McGregor, 1992). Furthermore, there are new concerns that the ready availability of material in electronic form on the World Wide Web means that to plagiarize involves less effort, and at the same time, the probability of detection is reduced. It is hoped that recognition of this increasing ease might result in greater awareness of the problem and increasingly imaginative ways of combating it (Leland, 1998; Armstrong, 1993). However, how can one know if a partic-

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ular method is effective in reducing actual cheating behavior? Without empirical studies, educators are in danger of engaging in all kinds of measures whose value remains untested, or worse, they may do nothing out of a pessimistic sense that nothing can be achieved.

The present study is an empirical investigation of what can be done to combat plagiarism by examining the efficacy of statements about academic fraud. With reference to the recent scandal involving athletes at the University of Minnesota, it has been stated that "both the cheater and the one who makes the cheating possible should be harshly judged" ("Editorial" 1999). Such a view lays an additional responsibility on educators, by suggesting that there is only a fine line between direct collusion and complicity (exemplified by the role of the tutor who did coursework for the athletes) and apparently condoning the behavior by failing to address it at an institutional level. Thus, those accused by the University of Minnesota of cheating have leveled a counteraccusation of misconduct at the University itself. Many authors have made the specific recommendation that educational institutions should publish statements on academic dishonesty, giving clear definitions and guidelines on how to avoid inadvertent plagiarism, for example. Nevertheless, to date, there have been no experimental studies designed to examine the efficacy of such statements in terms of reduced likelihood of cheating.

The literature on academic dishonesty is concerned mainly with such issues as to what constitutes cheating, who cheats, their reasons for cheating, and perhaps most importantly, what might be done to prevent cheating. There have been a number of surveys assessing incidence as well as student and faculty perceptions of and attitudes toward various activities. These studies examined behaviors incontrovertibly regarded as cheating and also some that might be considered as falling in the gray areas of academic fraud. The results indicate that a large proportion of students admit to having engaged in academic fraud, and a similarly large proportion believe that their peers also engage in this behavior (Deal, 1984; Franklin-Stokes and Newstead, 1995; Graham, Monday, O'Brien, and Steffen, 1994; Genereux and McLeod, 1995; Kerkvliet, 1994). The frequency of cheating increases when students are aware of others cheating (Evans and Craig, 1990; Genereux and McLeod, 1995), suggesting that a climate of cheating is likely to result in increasing rates of cheating. Bunn, Caudil, and Gropper (1992) found that students considered cheating no more than a trivial problem. Anderson and Obenshain (1994) suggest that people who violate the rules might be more tolerant toward the idea of violation and also that they might be more likely to project their "irregular behavior" in order to make it seem less deviant. However, Barnett and Dalton (1981) suggested students plagiarize because they do not perceive it as wrong, and Evans and Craig, reporting that those who have cheated tend to give lower severity ratings to cheating behaviors, agree that this might be a causal factor in cheating. Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead found for most cheating behaviors there was a significant inverse

correlation between ratings of severity and estimates of frequency: Behaviors regarded as most trivial had the highest frequency estimates. Furthermore, estimates of frequency in the cohort were found to reflect actual (anonymous self-report) frequency. Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead conclude that staff are naive about the extent of cheating; they also appear to be failing to communicate to the students what constitutes academic dishonesty. Therefore, an effective strategy to reduce cheating might be to increase education about the severity of the problem. However, the efficacy of this approach is no doubt diminished by confusion among staff, as well as students, about what constitutes academic dishonesty. Of all cheating behaviors, plagiarism is identified as being a particular source of confusion (Evans and Craig, 1990; Evans, Craig, and Mietzel, 1993; Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead, 1995; Waugh, Godfrey, Evans, and Craig, 1994). Evans and Craig reported that a quarter of teachers and nearly half of the school students did not understand that unaccredited paraphrasing (i.e., plagiarism) was a form of cheating. Cheating has been found to be more likely if instructors appear not to care (Genereux and McLeod, 1995) or when instructors disagree about whether a behavior is cheating (Graham et al., 1994). Furthermore, of all the cheating behaviors, it is plagiarism items that had the lowest severity ratings and highest frequency estimates in the survey of Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead. This suggests that if the significant proportion of staff and students who do not perceive plagiarism as a serious problem were educated about the problem, students might be less likely to plagiarize, and staff might be more likely to punish the behavior when it is detected.

The object of the present experiment was to compare the effect of two institutional statements as responses to a questionnaire about plagiarism. To maintain ecological validity, we used actual statements from two different course booklets in use at the University at the time. The statements had been written to fulfill the institutional requirement that all course booklets contain a definition of plagiarism and a warning of its consequences. The two passages were selected because of the ways they differed from each other. We predicted that the statements would differentially impact on students' ratings of the severity of plagiarism and on their perception of how seriously staff viewed it. Of particular interest was the possibility that there might be a change in estimates of frequency, which would have promising implications for future prevalence.

METHODS

Subjects and Procedure

In the psychology program at the University of St. Andrews there are lectures and practical classes each week. Attendance at lectures is not compulsory, and those who attend lectures might be considered a self-selected group, possibly not typical of all students enrolled in the program (for example, these students

might be regarded as more conscientious than the absent students). The practical classes, however, are compulsory and so only a small number of medically certified and excused students would be absent. Therefore, questionnaires were distributed and collected prior to the start of teaching in four compulsory practical classes (one for each academic year). By collecting data in these practical classes, we could be certain that we were sampling a group of students representative of the population enrolled in psychology. As there are many more first- and second-year students, there are multiple practicals for these years. We sampled from one classroom for each year so that the disproportionate contribution of the first- and second-year students to the data set would be minimized.

The students were asked to participate in a study concerned with the academic behavior of student groups and were informed that responses would not be traceable to individual students. To ensure maximum cooperation, the questionnaires were short and designed to take no more than a few minutes to complete. A total of 218 questionnaires (representing two thirds of the undergraduate population of the School of Psychology) were collected. Eleven questionnaires were incomplete, leaving a total of 207 in the analysis. In the final sample, there were 70 first-year (21 male and 49 female), 61 second-year (15 male and 46 female), 45 third-year (11 male and 34 female) and 31 fourth-year (8 male, 23 female) students. The mean age of the respondents was 19.9 (range 18–39) years. Table 1 shows the numbers of subjects in each treatment condition by gender and year of study.

Booklets were made up of: (1) identical cover sheets onto which the student wrote their age, gender, and year of study; (2) one of the two statements on plagiarism or no statement; (3) two samples of plagiarism (verbatim copy or close paraphrase, presented in either order) each of which was followed by five questions. Subjects were assigned as they entered the classroom to conditions by being given a booklet from the top of a randomized pile so that the conditions were not in order and any particular student was as likely to receive a booklet from any condition. In particular, one might worry that latecomers to the class might be different from the first to arrive: By distributing conditions equally through the pile, this potentially confounding factor was removed. As the covers of the booklets were identical, neither the experimenter nor the students were

TABLE 1. Numbers of Subjects in Each Condition

Condition	First Year		Second Year		Third Year		Fourth Year		Totals
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Educational	4	14	4	10	4	8	2	5	51
Warning	7	12	4	12	3	9	2	5	54
No Information	10	23	7	24	4	17	4	13	102

aware of the condition (indeed, the students were not even aware that there were different conditions).

Experimental Conditions

There were three different plagiarism information conditions as a between-subjects factor. These were "Educational," "Warning," and "No Information." For the first two conditions, the booklets given to the respondents contained a short passage about plagiarism before the questionnaire.

The full texts of the passages are given in the Appendix. In the "Educational" condition, the passage (270 words) was designed to educate the student about the problem of plagiarism and how it can be avoided. The passage gave an extensive description and an example of the correct way to cite material. The tone of the passage was serious, referring to "scholarship" and "etiquette." In the "Warning" condition, the passage (137 words) contained a more limited (and arguably inaccurate) definition of plagiarism, and there was no description of the correct way to cite material. The warning went on to refer to the frequency of plagiarism as being low. The tone of the passage was less serious, referring to plagiarism as "misbehavior" and a "stupid" risk. Having read and "fully understood" the passage, the subjects were instructed to complete the questionnaire without turning back to the passage. In the third, "No information," condition, the respondent was given no prior instruction about plagiarism and proceeded to complete the questionnaire.

Questionnaire Procedure

The questionnaire began with two short (~80 word) pieces of text, placed side by side on the page. They were told that the left-hand passage had been taken from an introductory psychology textbook and that the right-hand passage was from a student's essay. Using a repeated measures design, the material referred to as the student's was either identical (verbatim copy) to the textbook or was an unacknowledged close paraphrase (paraphrase). The paraphrased material was based on the paraphrasing definition given in item 4 of the Academic Practices Survey of Roig and DeTommaso (1995). After reading the passages, the respondents answered five questions: Question 1 asked how seriously the behavior was viewed by respondents (*"If you, or one of your year group, had written the right hand piece of writing in an essay, do you consider it in breach of academic guidelines?"*); Question 2 asked how seriously respondents thought it would be viewed by staff (*"If a member of staff noticed that you had used the text in one of your essays, do you think they would consider it to be a breach of academic guidelines?"*); Question 3 asked for perceived frequency (*"Since being at university, what proportion of students amongst those in your year group might have produced work such as that above?"*); Question 4 was in-

tended to find out how well plagiarism was understood by the student (*"The textbook was on the reading list. Is it necessary for the student to have given the reference to it at the end of this passage of text?"*); Question 5 was intended to find out how well the student thought other students avoided plagiarism (*"How likely do you think it is that a student from your year group would have given this reference?"*). The responses were given on a 0 to 100 continuous line scale to indicate seriousness ("no breach" to "this is an extremely serious breach"), frequency ("nobody does it" to "everybody does it at least once"), necessity ("not necessary" to "absolutely necessary") and likelihood ("very unlikely" to "very likely").

Respondents completed both the verbatim and the paraphrase conditions with the order of each condition counterbalanced between subjects. The two sets of material (verbatim and paraphrased) contained different texts, but the five questions were the same for both.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by repeated measures analysis of variance (SPSS, version 9.0), using Type III sums of squares because the sample sizes were unequal. Each question was analyzed separately with the within subjects factor of Material (verbatim or paraphrased) and the between subjects factors Condition (Educational, Warning and No information) and year of study (one to four). We had made no specific predictions about the effect of gender. Furthermore, the sample comprised many more females than males, a difference that was particularly marked in the fourth year cohort with just 8 male subjects. Although preliminary data analysis revealed that there were no significant main effects of gender, we concluded that there was insufficient statistical power to draw meaningful conclusions either way about possible gender effects and so this factor was not analyzed. There were no effects of applying transformations to normalize distributions; therefore, only analyses of untransformed data are presented.

We predicted that ratings of severity of plagiarism might be related to estimates of frequency and perhaps also to the level of understanding of plagiarism. Therefore, the relationship between severity ratings (the responses to Questions 1 and 2) and the other questions were examined using the non-parametric Spearman's rank correlation.

RESULTS

Effect of Plagiarism Information Condition on Severity and Frequency Judgments

Table 2 shows the mean response to Questions 1, 2, and 3, which were answered with reference to both verbatim and paraphrased material. For responses

TABLE 2. Respondents' Perception of Severity

Condition	Question 1			Question 2			Question 3						
	Verbatim copy		Paraphrasing	Verbatim copy		Paraphrasing	Verbatim copy		Paraphrasing				
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)			
Educational	92.9	(14.8)	69.1	(22.6)	94.6	(12.5)	75.9	(20.1)	22.8	(23.6)	53.0	(29.2)	**
Warning	88.2	(17.0)	53.1	(26.0)	90.4	(14.2)	60.6	(25.7)	36.0	(24.9)	68.4	(24.5)	n.s.
No Information	88.2	(15.8)	53.5	(26.1)	90.9	(15.7)	62.9	(26.6)	33.3	(26.1)	66.4	(26.1)	n.s.

Note: Question 1: 0-100: "No breach"- "Extremely serious breach," their perception of the staff view of severity (Question 2: scale as for Question 1) and their estimate of frequency (Question 3: 0-100: "No one does it"- "Everybody does it at least once").

**Main effects of Condition, $p < 0.001$.

to all three questions, only the Educational plagiarism passage had an effect on responding: responses of students who read the Warning passage were not different from those of students who had been given no passage to read.

Respondents in the Educational condition regarded plagiarism (both verbatim copying or unacknowledged paraphrasing) as a more serious breach of academic guidelines than did respondents in either of the other conditions (Question 1, main effect of Condition, $F[2,195] = 5.45, p < 0.01$). The same pattern was seen in their judgment of the views of staff (Question 2, main effect of Condition, $F[2,195] = 4.1, p < 0.02$). Respondents also gave lower frequency estimates having read the Educational material compared to the Warning and No information conditions (Question 3, main effect of Condition, $F[2,195] = 5.2, p < 0.01$). Figure 1 shows the main effect of Condition for Questions 1, 2 and 3, averaged for verbatim and paraphrased material.

There were no other significant main effects or interactions in the analyses of Questions 1, 2, and 3. In particular, there was no main effect of year of study and this factor did not significantly interact with any other factor.

Effect of Material: Verbatim Copying or Close Paraphrasing

In all conditions, verbatim copying was regarded as a more serious breach of academic guidelines than was paraphrasing of material in the opinion of the respondents (Question 1, main effect of Material, $F[1,195] = 257.1, p < 0.001$) and in their perception of the view of staff (Question 2, main effect of Material,

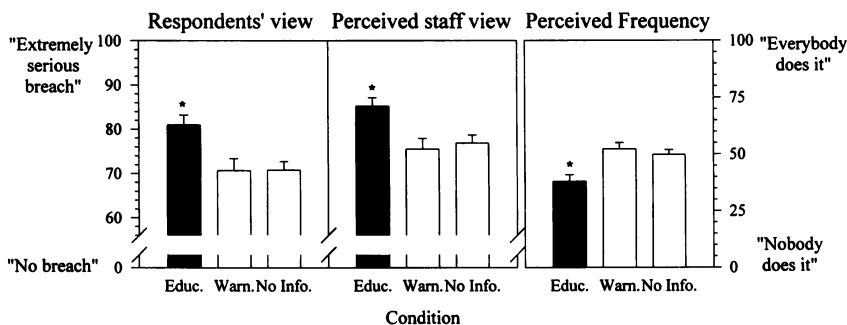


FIG. 1. The figure shows the effect of giving information about plagiarism on the respondents' ratings of severity as perceived by them and as attributed to staff (left panel) and on their perceptions of frequency of plagiarism (right panel). Respondents who read the "educational" information viewed plagiarism as a more serious breach and also thought that it occurred less frequently than either respondents who read the plagiarism "Warning" or those who read no passage before completing the questionnaire (*indicates main effect of Condition, $p < 0.001$).

$F[1,195] = 169.1, p < 0.001$). Verbatim copying was perceived as occurring less frequently than close and unacknowledged paraphrasing (Question 3, main effect of Material, $F[1,195] = 283.0, p < 0.001$). Of interest, there were no significant interactions between the Material and Condition in any of the analyses. The significant effect of Condition was without respect to whether the material was a verbatim copy or closely paraphrased.

The Relationship Between Perceived Severity and Estimates of Frequency

The relationship between perceived severity and estimated frequency was examined by analyzing the correlations between Question 3 (frequency estimate) versus Question 1 (own view of severity) and Question 2 (perceived staff view). There was an inverse relationship such that perceived severity increases as perceived frequency decreases. This relationship applied to both the respondents' own view of severity ($r_s = -0.46, p < 0.001$ and $r_s = -0.49, p < 0.001$, for verbatim and paraphrased material respectively) and their perception of the view of staff ($r_s = -0.43, p < 0.001$ and $r_s = -0.39, p < 0.001$, for verbatim and paraphrased material respectively) and was found to hold across all conditions ($p < 0.05$, for each condition when analyzed separately). Figure 2 (upper panels) shows the relationship between the estimates of frequency and the answers to Questions 1 and 2, plotted for each type of material (verbatim copy or paraphrase).

Understanding of the Necessity and Likelihood of Citing a Source

The necessity of citing sources was well recognized, with well over three-quarters of the students thinking that it was "absolutely necessary" to cite a textbook from which text had been copied verbatim and over half thinking it was "absolutely necessary" to cite one from which text had been paraphrased (see Table 3. Question 4, main effect of Material, $F[1,195] = 47.3, p < 0.001$). There was no statistically significant effect of condition on the judgement of the necessity of citing a source (main effect of Condition, $F[1,195] = 0.94, n.s.$; all interactions non-significant). However, there was a significant, positive correlation of ranks between the judgments of severity and judgments of the need to cite the source for both verbatim (Question 1 vs. 3: $r_s = 0.54, p < 0.001$; Question 2 vs. 3: $r_s = 0.54, p < 0.001$) and paraphrased material (Question 1 vs. 3: $r_s = 0.20, p < 0.01$; Question 2 vs. 3: $r_s = 0.19, p < 0.01$). The ranked, data are plotted in Figure 2.

Although the necessity of the giving the citation was judged to be high, the perceived *likelihood* of a hypothetical student giving it was lower, tended to be bimodal (see Figure 2, lower panels), and was not found to be a function of the

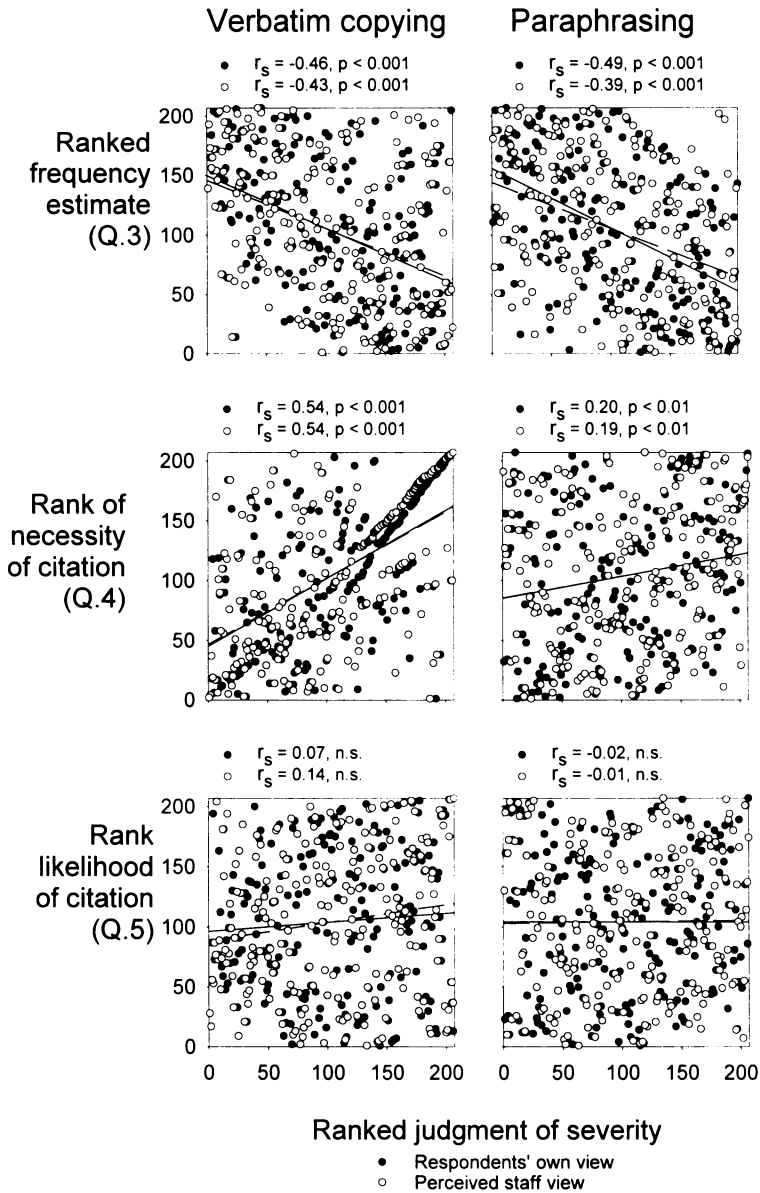


FIG. 2. The figure shows scatter plots of the raw data from Questions 1 (open symbols) and 2 (closed symbols) for verbatim material (left hand panel) and paraphrased material (right hand panel), plotted against Question 3 (upper panels), 4 (middle panels) and 5 (lower panels). There are significant negative correlations between ratings of severity and estimates of frequency and significant positive correlations between ratings of severity and the understanding of the necessity of citing a source. The values of Spearman's rho (correlation of ranks for nonparametric data) are given above each plot.

TABLE 3. Respondents' Understanding of the Need to Include the Citation

Condition	Question 4				Question 5				
	Verbatim Copy		Paraphrasing		Verbatim Copy		Paraphrasing		
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Educational	92.5	(19.8)	81.6	(24.2)	49.1	(38.8)	61.5	(29.3)	n.s.
Warning	89.6	(20.0)	75.1	(31.3)	66.9	(29.3)	58.4	(29.6)	n.s.
No Info.	89.8	(19.2)	76.9	(27.2)	58.1	(33.7)	60.1	(26.8)	n.s.

Note: (Question 4: 0–100: “Not necessary”–“Absolutely necessary” and their view of the likelihood of the citation being included (Question 5: 0–100: “Very unlikely”–“Very likely”). No significant main effects of Condition denoted by n.s.

Material (see Table 3. Question 5, main effect of Material, $F[1,195] = 0.7$, n.s.) or Condition (main effect of Condition, $F[2,195] = 2.1$, n.s.). Furthermore, there was no relationship between responses to Question 5 and ratings of severity (see Figure 2).

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to examine the effect of providing plagiarism information on the attitude of students. Having read either one of two passages on plagiarism or having had no information, students were questioned about their perceptions of verbatim copying and unacknowledged paraphrasing. Students who read the Educational passage gave higher ratings of severity and lower estimates of frequency than students who read the Warning passage or those given no passage to read.

In research of this sort, it is important to ensure that subjects are not merely responding the way that they think they are expected to respond. These are known as the *demand characteristics* of the experiment. However, education is about demand characteristics; any information given with the intent to educate will have inherent demand characteristics, as the object is to get pupils to behave the way they are expected. This study was designed to examine the efficacy of different types of messages in conveying demands about plagiarism. The results indicate that the wording of statements on plagiarism is critical—it is not sufficient merely to make a statement; the statement must be worded appropriately. The discussion will first consider the effects of the different statements on subjects responding and consider what the possible mechanism may be. The implications of the findings for academic policy will then be considered.

As expected, respondents regarded it as a more serious breach of academic

guidelines to copy text verbatim as opposed to unacknowledged paraphrasing material. They also reported a similar perception of the view of staff. This is most likely because verbatim copying is more obviously unacceptable behavior, whereas, perhaps because paraphrasing entails some effort to modify the text, this violation is perceived as less severe. The perception of the relative severity of verbatim copying compared to paraphrasing was not altered as a result of reading either of the plagiarism statements. It has been shown previously that there is often disagreement among staff about plagiarism (Evans and Craig, 1990; Graham et al., 1994), and this might also extend to students (Barnett and Dalton, 1981). Given that verbatim copying is more obviously a breach of academic standards, an important goal of any statement on plagiarism would be to promote the recognition that unacknowledged paraphrasing is also plagiarism and a violation of academic standards. Therefore, it might be expected that perceptions of the severity of paraphrasing would be more susceptible to the effects of giving a clear, unambiguous definition of plagiarism. However, we found that the respondents' ratings of the severity of the breach were increased by the Educational passage for *both* verbatim copying and unacknowledged paraphrasing. This suggests that it was probably more than just the clear definition of plagiarism in the Educational passage that changed the respondents' ratings: The tone of the passage probably also contributed to give the general impression that plagiarism in all forms should be considered a serious breach of scholarship.

Although this study did not address the possible effect of the Educational passage on the future likelihood of engaging in plagiarism, it previously has been shown that students are more likely to plagiarize when they do not perceive it as being wrong (Barnett and Dalton, 1981) or when they perceive that staff do not take it seriously (Genereux and McLeod, 1995). As reading the Educational passage increased the perceptions of severity, it would be reasonable to conclude that such a passage might also be effective in reducing the prevalence of plagiarism.

Estimates of frequency can be used to gauge the prevalence of a behavior with high levels of a behavior being reflected in high estimates of frequency in the group (Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead, 1995). This relationship between perceived severity and perceived frequency was a pattern that we also found here. For example, verbatim copying was regarded as both a more severe breach and as occurring less frequently than unacknowledged paraphrasing. Most significantly, however, we found that the effect of the Educational condition was both to increase perceived severity and decrease perceived frequency, with the inverse relationship between these measures holding across Conditions. This suggests that it might be more reasonable to assume that perception of rates of cheating fall with the perception of increasing deviance rather than to assume that cheaters judge their behavior less severely as a post hoc rationalization. Given the relationship between perceived and actual behavior, it also provides

additional support for the contention that education about plagiarism is likely to be effective in reducing the prevalence of plagiarism.

It is of interest that the Warning passage had no effect at all (relative to the No Information condition) on the perception of frequency of plagiarism, as the Warning passage contained a statement expressing the view that plagiarism is unusual because students would not risk failing their degree. If this statement had been taken at face value, one would have expected the estimates of frequency of plagiarism to fall. Instead, this passage had no effect on any measure, including the estimate of frequency, and responses did not differ from the No Information condition. It is quite likely that this is because the statement was simply not believed: Clearly, the respondents believe that their peers *do* take the risk and therefore, in making such a statement, staff would appear to be either unconcerned or naïve. We can conclude that although it has not been proven in this study that the Educational passage is effective in changing actual cheating behavior we can state with confidence that the Warning passage is likely to be ineffective as a tool to modify actual cheating behavior, as it is ineffective even in changing the responses to a questionnaire.

All the respondents showed remarkable consistency in their understanding of the necessity of citing sources, with a large majority of respondents reporting that it was “absolutely necessary” to cite a textbook from which text had been copied or paraphrased. Although there were significant positive correlations between severity ratings and appreciation of the need to cite a source, this did not change as a function of the plagiarism information given. This finding further supports the contention that the effect of the Educational information was probably not to change the respondents’ understanding of the definition of plagiarism, but rather to change their perception of the severity of the problem. The perception of the likelihood of the source being cited by one of their year group was found to change as a function of the Educational information, which resulted in a lower perceived likelihood of the citation being given. The passage went into some detail about how to cite a text correctly, including that one should note page numbers from the source and whether formatting had been changed, and so forth. It is possible that the respondents who read this passage were relatively unfamiliar with the correct way to cite material and might have judged that there was little likelihood of their cohort citing the material correctly.

We conclude that providing information about plagiarism is an effective way to change the perceptions of how seriously plagiarism breaches academic guidelines. However, the nature of the material is very important: A cursory definition and friendly warning was found to be ineffective compared with a more detailed description of how to avoid plagiarism. It remains to be examined whether such a change in perception has a long-term effect and whether it is sufficient to reduce the actual likelihood of plagiarism among undergraduates. However, our data suggest that carefully worded material can encourage students to take a

more serious view of the issue, and this is likely to have positive effects on future behavior.

The year following this study, one of the authors engaged a student in a discussion of plagiarism and asked whether plagiarism was perceived to be a problem. The reply was that the student had never thought about it until she had been a subject in this study the previous academic session. (Not realizing my involvement, she accurately described the passage she had read and the questionnaire in some detail.) She admitted to always skipping over the statement on plagiarism that the University requires to be inserted into every course handbook; indeed, she was unaware that *every* handbook had such a statement. However, she informed me that as a result of participating, the students had started to discuss these and related issues among themselves. (For example, is it plagiarism to “learn” and reproduce lecture notes verbatim? Should one cite “A Lecturer” for ideas and discussion, or acknowledge the contribution of another student with whom one had discussed a topic?) She concluded that plagiarism was an issue that was too easy to ignore. Although the shocking discovery of student cheating will bring these issues to the fore (e.g., “The cheating episode that prompted our study appears to have had a significant impact on the students in the class involved,” Anderson and Obenshain, 1994), an occasional public example cannot be relied on to maintain low levels of cheating. Rather, a systematic effort must be made at all levels to encourage the students to consider these issues, and consideration must be given to the type of messages we give our students.

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APPENDIX

Text of the “Educational” Condition

Thomas Mallon (1989)¹ observes “The inability of the literary and academic worlds adequately to define, much less reasonably punish, instances of plagiarism was something I observed again and again” (p. xii).

The purpose of this section is to inform you of (i) the definition of plagiarism that the [department] adopts and (ii) the penalties which will be incurred should you breach this fundamental rule of scholarship.

The [department] defines plagiarism as the unacknowledged use of text, either copied verbatim or closely paraphrased. The text may be published material (in which case, the plagiarism may also be a breach of copyright) or unpublished work (such as the work of another student—notes, essays, Ph.D., or masters dissertations etc.).

You should familiarize yourself with the correct, scholarly way of citing others' works. If you choose to quote text, the text should be shown inside inverted commas. It is customary to include the page number(s) of the source and indicate whether formatting, such as italics, has been modified. If you choose to paraphrase someone, you should clearly attribute the source. If the work is unpublished, it would be polite to request permission from the author to cite the material. The material should then be cited as “unpublished work” or “personal

communication". If you copy figures, these should also be cited appropriately (e.g., "From . . .") and the etiquette of seeking permission should be observed.

If plagiarism is detected in your work, you will normally receive an automatic fail of the plagiarized work. In the case of a Ph.D. or master's dissertation, this means that you would normally fail your degree.

REFERENCE

1. Thomas Mallon, (1989). *Stolen Words: Forays into the Origins and Ravages of Plagiarism*. Penguin Books: New York.

Text of the "Warning" Condition:

The university requires us in all course booklets to give a special warning against dishonestly submitting as one's own work that which has been copied from another student's work, and to define and warn against plagiarism (i.e., "unacknowledged and extensive appropriation of material which is not original to the student"). Please do not think that in doing so here we are suggesting for one moment that plagiarism or cheating are regularly occurring; we do not believe that. Our faith is not because we are poor at detecting such misbehaviour, because at subhonours we do so regularly. Instead, we think that none of our Honours students would be so stupid as to take the risk, where the statutory maximum sanction is that no degree will be awarded, even were the idea to occur to anyone.