Chapter 1
Do Students Follow the Wisdom or the Madness of Crowds?

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Abstract The collective decisions of groups of people can often be better or more accurate than the decisions of individuals. Still, many examples in human history show that bad ideas can be whipped up in large groups of people. When searching for what product to buy, what restaurant to visit, or what movie to attend, people often use popularity as a useful rule of thumb. Together, the phenomena of being informed by, and following, the crowd shows people's tendency to be influenced by *norms*. Referring to norms as a guide as to what to do in a situation, and being influenced by norms, is a common theme in social sciences research on academic integrity. Students' decisions to plagiarise, cheat, or follow good academic citation practices are influenced by what other students are doing. These decisions are also influenced by what students *think* other students are doing. Norms come in several forms, such as descriptive, injunctive, subjective, objective, and cultural. The influence of norms can be overt or non-conscious. This chapter considers the roles of norms in influencing academic misconduct and how norms can be used to improve academic integrity.

Keywords Academic integrity · Academic misconduct · Norms · Descriptive · Injunctive · Subjective · Culture

> *Men, it has been well said, think in herds; it will be seen that they go mad in herds, while they only recover their senses slowly, and one by one.* (Mackay, 1852, p. viii).

> *Paradoxically, the best way for a group to be smart is for each person in it to think and act as independently as possible.* (Surowiecki, 2005, p. xix–xx).

> *The eccentricity people have as individuals, the tragic predictability in groups. Every little snowflake is unique, but it's all just snow.* (Boyle, 2022).

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Everyone Else Is Doing It

When ascending or descending a large building using a device that Americans call an "elevator" and the English call a "lift", there are unspoken rules of behaviour. When the elevator arrives to collect you from your floor, you make way for people exiting before you get in. Young children may not know that they should allow others out first, and their guardians will tell them to wait for others. When you get in, you check whether the button for the floor you are going to has been pressed, and, if not, you press it. You then attempt to maximally separate yourself from other people in the elevator and stand silent and still as it goes up or down to your floor. If you are in the elevator with someone you know, and a stranger is also present, you may make quiet conversation with the person you know. If the passengers are only you and your acquaintances you might talk at a louder volume. If the elevator stops at a floor before you alight, you make way for others getting in or out, and when it reaches your floor, you excuse yourself if you have to brush past other people in order to exit.

The description of what to do in an elevator sounds familiar, right? You've probably been in an elevator enough times to know this is how it is done. These well-known widely-shared patterns of behaviour are called *norms* in psychology and many other social sciences.[1] Some are not equally shared – the occasional person will get in the elevator talking noisily with their friends and seem unabashed by this. Some behaviours are so well known that even in my example, they do not need to be said. If you imagined yourself following the elevator-use script above, was everyone in the elevator facing the door, the side walls, or the back? "The door" you think, without a moment's contemplation – turning to face the door when you get in an elevator is a very well engrained norm indeed. So, take a few seconds to imaging getting into the elevator and facing the side wall. Would you feel wrong or awkward? Imagine someone got into the elevator and faced the side wall while you face the doors, what would you think of them? Are they weird, or perhaps even threatening?

A norm like facing the elevator doors is so well understood that not only did you imagine it before I asked you to, you probably felt uncomfortable just imaging facing the side. People would stare, you'd probably stare at someone doing it. A highly engrained norm becomes a powerful and unconscious guide to behaviour, and breaking it requires similar concentration as would writing with your non-dominant hand.

Observers of, and commentors on, human behaviour have noted the influence of the group on the individual since before psychology was even considered to be an independent academic discipline. *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* by Mackay (1852), quoted at the start of this chapter, pre-dates, but helped to inspire, the foundational *Principles of Psychology* by James et al. (1890) published nearly 40 years later. Mackay (1852) told the comprehensive tales of how people at, and before, his time were swept up in various crazes, religious movements,

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[1] The concept of objective norms of morality is discussed in literature on ethics and moral philosophy. This chapter is focused on the concept of norms as it is understood in psychology.

fashions, and investment bubbles that all gained momentum the more followers, devotees, and dupes joined the bandwagon, and all fell apart as people slowly gained (or regained) some perspective. To put it in psychoanalytic terms, the actions of people in groups around us have the potential to unshackle the id, but also, the potential to bolster the super-ego.

So, why is it that norms can be particularly influential on people's behaviour? What value is there in following norms? According to Cialdini's (2009) classic work on the psychology of influence, following norms provides us with a good way to determine the right thing to do in many situations without having to necessarily reason out every action and consequence. In short, if a lot of people are buying a certain product, for example a particular car model, there is probably something good about it that makes it more popular than other models. However, if people only follow the crowd and do no other thinking, the popularity of a product may simply become a self-reinforcing system (it's popular because it's popular), hence the wisdom of the crowd may lead us astray (Cialdini, 2009). Another reason for following norms is safety (Cialdini, 2009). If you are visiting the zoo and a large crowd of people come running toward you it is best to run with them rather than wait to see which escaped animal is chasing them.

Bandura's social learning theory also speaks to the influence of other people on our actions (Bandura & Walters, 1977). While classical reinforcement theory (e.g. Skinner, 1958) suggests that we do what gets rewarded, Bandura and Walters (1977) argued that people can learn to do what they see others being rewarded for doing. Thus, if we are a student and we see another student succeed by cheating, we can learn from this that cheating can be rewarding.

Social scientists who have turned their minds to academic integrity have found that norms exert an influence on whether students engage in academic misconduct such as cheating and plagiarism (Zhao et al., 2022). In this chapter, I review research on the effect of norms on academic misconduct and consider how norms can be used to enhance academic integrity in education. Before this, however, it is important to distinguish between different types of norms.

Forms of Norms

There has been some inconsistency in the terms used to describe various types of norms within the psychology literature. For example, in the theory of planned behaviour (discussed in more detail later), Ajzen (1991) describes "subjective" norms as people's perceptions of the pressures from important others to engage in, or refrain from, certain behaviours. Other authors define perceptions of what *should be done* in a situation as "injunctive" norms (e.g., Locke et al., 2017; Rivis & Sheeran, 2003), which would make Ajzen's (1991) "subjective" norm an "injunctive" norm by this definition. Given such disagreements over definitions, in this section I am going to outline what I intend the following six terms to mean in the context of norms: subjective, objective, descriptive, injunctive, implicit, and explicit.

First, it is crucial to distinguish between subjective and objective norms. Using a dictionary-style definition, *subjective* norms are what individuals perceive norms to be, whereas *objective* norms are those that factually describe the typical behaviour in a situation. This distinction is important if we consider the psychological phenomenon the false-consensus effect (Ross et al., 1977), which shows that people tend to overestimate the commonality of their own beliefs – i.e., the subjective and objective norms of behaviour can differ systematically. A consequence of the false-consensus effect is that people can subjectively perceive their own minority beliefs about what is typical or acceptable in a situation as being a majority (or normative) position that differs from objective reality. Thus, an objective norm may be quantified as one that describes the real prevalence of a behaviour in a situation.

A *descriptive* norm is a representation of what people typically do (objective descriptive norm), or think others typically do (subjective descriptive norm), in a given situation. Typically, for example, people in the UK stand in queues at bus stops, sing along with their favourite songs at a rock concert, and turn to face the doors once they have entered a lift. A descriptive norm can also indicate what people typically do not do, such as ocean swimming in mid-winter. Descriptive norms can vary in strength and this strength can be described statistically by way of a simple percentage of the population. A strong descriptive norm is something nearly everyone in a population does, or is thought to do, in a given situation, e.g., people in North Korea crying in public when their leader dies. A weak descriptive norm is still a majority behaviour, but where a significant proportion of people do something else, e.g., eating meat.

As noted above, an *injunctive* norm is a representation about what is the right thing to do in a situation. Injunctive norms can be subjective perceptions of the consensus of others or imposed more objectively through laws, regulations, and policies. Although people differ as individuals, injunctive norms can have a powerful effect on how they behave in one situation versus another. Take a society such as Japan, where there are highly formalised and deferential behaviours associated with, for example, a tea ceremony, but also the wackiest gameshows in the known world where both contestants and audiences act exuberantly. A Japanese person may be personally introverted or extroverted, but when put in the situation where the tea ceremony or gameshow injunctive norms apply, they will behave consistently with those norms (Locke et al., 2017).

An *implicit* norm is something that can be inferred from a situation, is not conscious to the person in that situation, and yet may still influence the person. Cialdini et al. (1990), for example, observed the impact of littering by leaving differing numbers of flyers on the floor of a dormitory mail room. They observed that the more flyers were left on the floor, the more students also dropped the flyers from their own mailboxes on the floor. This suggested that people subconsciously picked up that the norm set by others was to drop flyers when more were on the floor, and they followed this norm. Aarts and Dijksterhuis (2003) found that just getting people to think about libraries and fancy restaurants, without being in them, led to them talking more quietly and cleaning up their cookie crumbs. Again, this suggests that mentally "activating" a norm, even without specific awareness of the norm, can influence behaviour.

Explicit norms are those that are made salient when people are told what others do, are doing, or expect to do. Economists who are interested in "nudges", for example, have found that they increase compliance with on-time bill-payment requests by letting people know that most other people pay on time (Thaler & Sunstein, 2021). This example is an objective descriptive norm being made explicit. In the context of academic integrity and academic misconduct, various authors have suggested making descriptive norms such as "most students do not engage in contract cheating" (Rundle et al., 2019, p 1.) explicit, as well as advocating for injunctive norms of what is "the right thing to do" to be explicitly communicated to students in various ways (McCabe et al., 2006).

In sum, the six terms for norms described above are, in fact, three dichotomies (subjective vs. objective; descriptive vs. injunctive; implicit vs. explicit). As the discussion has begun to imply, it is possible for a norm to have three descriptors based on the three dichotomous categories. For example, an implicit-subjective-injunctive norm is a norm of what is the right thing to do (injunctive), that someone is not consciously aware of (implicit), based on their own perceptions of reality (subjective). Thus, the permutations of these terms mean that there are ultimately eight categories of norms, and it is possible that each has equally powerful, or more or less powerful, impacts on people's behaviour depending on the situation, the individual characteristics of the person, and the strength of the norm. Clearly, this has the potential to get quite complicated.

Academic integrity and academic misconduct research has not been so thorough, or so hair-splitting, to have explored the influence of all forms of norms with all types of situations and all kinds of people. Research on academic integrity has, in some respects, done a good job of suggesting that norms are potentially highly influential on students' propensity to cheat and plagiarise. On the other hand, research on academic integrity has a long way to go to fully unpack and understand the influence of all forms of norms on academic misconduct.

Research on Norms and Academic Integrity

For around 80 years, researchers have been interested in, and aware of, the influence of group norms among higher education students on each other's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours (e.g., Newcomb, 1943). It was not until the 1980s–90s that studies examining the relationship between norms and academic misconduct began to be regularly published. Articles where norms are centrally or peripherally examined as a predictor of student misconduct have appeared across a broad range of social sciences journals covering psychology (e.g., Rundle et al., 2019, 2023), criminology (e.g., Ogilvie & Stewart, 2010), higher education (e.g., Curtis et al., 2018), and further afield in areas like business (e.g., Hendy & Montargot, 2019; Simkin & McLeod, 2009). A key driver of this trend was the development of the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), where an early study testing this theory showed that it could predict students' engagement in cheating (Beck & Ajzen, 1991).

The theory of planned behaviour is a good place to start in discussing research on the relationship between norms and academic misconduct. This theory proposes that attitudes (mostly conceived of as how people evaluate and/or feel about something), subjective norms (typically injunctive-subjective norms as discussed earlier), and perceptions that relevant behaviour can be controlled, together predict people's intentions, and their intentions predict their behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). As observation is critical to the social scientific method applied to academic integrity (Curtis & Clare, 2023), I was, in fact, motivated to research and write this chapter based on my observation that norms were often the strongest predictor of academic misconduct in several studies that I have worked on that examined the theory of planned behaviour (e.g., Curtis et al., 2018; Tindall et al., 2021).

Some of the earliest systematic psychological evidence of norms influencing academic misconduct comes from a study published in 1987, before the publication of the theory of planned behaviour. Stevens and Stevens (1987) examined students' self-perceptions as cheats and their perceptions of their peers' engagement in cheating. They found that the more students self-admitted to cheating, the more common they thought cheating was among their peers. Similar results were found more recently by Hard et al. (2006). Such findings, however, illustrate, as many other studies do, a potential example of the false-consensus effect: that students perceived their own beliefs and perceptions to be more widespread than they may have been. Importantly, they also show a relationship between the subjective-descriptive norms that students held and their own behaviour in the academic integrity context. However, as the relationship can be explained by the false-consensus effect, such studies leave open the important question of whether perceived norms *cause* rates of misconduct.

Other evidence suggests that although the false-consensus effect accounts for some of the relationship between the perceived prevalence of misconduct and engagement in misconduct (e.g., Curtis et al., 2022b), perceived norms most likely influence students' decisions to engage in misconduct. Franklin-Stokes and Newstead (1995), for example, provided students with open-ended questions asking them to offer explanations for why students engage in various forms of cheating and plagiarism. The qualitative analysis of students' responses to this survey found a theme of "everyone else is doing it" (i.e., it is the descriptive norm) as among the common reasons students provided for cheating. Similar results were obtained by Rezanejad and Rezaei (2013). These finding do not demonstrate a false consensus effect as the studies did not ask students to estimate some quantity of behaviour among their peers and disclose the quantity of their own behaviour of the same kind. One student engaging in misconduct may be setting an example for others to follow suit, which may ultimately become a norm. In the context of outsourcing coding assignments to bidders by computer science students, Clarke and Lancaster (2006) observed data suggesting that "once a student from a particular institution has posted an assignment as a bid . . . often within a week several other students from the same institution have also. . . ." (p. 11).

More recently, de Lima et al. (2022) found that the strongest predictor of plagiarism in their study was students' awareness of plagiarism among their peers. In their study, participants were asked if they engaged in various acts of plagiarism and whether they knew of other students who had engaged in the same acts. Asking for specific knowledge of other students' acts should be less effected by the false-consensus effect, which is driven by a subjective assessment of the commonality of others' behaviour. This finding concurs with that of Jurdi et al. (2012), who concluded that observing peers plagiarising increased rates of plagiarism. In sum, then, there is probative evidence from the studies reviewed in this paragraph that objective norms of peer misconduct may cause increased misconduct.

Recently, Zhao et al. (2022) conducted a meta-analysis of the effects of perceived peer cheating on students' own cheating. Covering 38 studies over 60 years, the papers reviewed in this meta-analysis included data from over 24,000 students. Their study also examined cultural influence on the connection between norms and cheating, which I will discuss later. In relation to the effect of perceived peer cheating on students' own cheating, Zhao et al. (2022) found that it was among the strongest predictors of cheating, with a large effect size (according to Gignac & Szodorai's, 2016, criteria) of $r = .37$. To be clear, the extent to which students perceive that their peers cheat was positively correlated with their own amount of cheating. To put this into a wider psychosocial context, the effect of subjective peer cheating norms on cheating is stronger than the effect on academic dishonesty of students' level conscientiousness ($r = -.25$), morality ($r = -.24$), and academic self-efficacy ($r = -.28$; Lee et al., 2020). In fact, according to Zhao et al.'s (2022) analysis, subjective peer cheating norms were the fourth strongest predictor of cheating from among 36 predictors examined in previous meta-analyses. Importantly, the strongest predictor of academic misconduct in these meta-analyses, neutralization, may itself be influenced by norms. Neutralization refers to students' capacity to provide post-hoc rationalizations for academic misconduct that may help them to feel less bad about cheating (Lee et al., 2020). Simola (2017) pointed out that the norm "everyone else is doing it" can be used by students *as* a rationalisation for violating standards of academic integrity.

Given that norms may cause increased or decreased academic misconduct, then, it is worth looking at norms within the theory of planned behaviour as a causal model for cheating and plagiarism. Numerous studies have found that norms contribute to academic misconduct in studies where the original or modified theory of planned behaviour was examined (e.g., Alleyne & Phillips, 2011; Beck & Ajzen, 1991; Chudzicka-Czupała et al., 2016; Harding et al., 2007; Tindall et al., 2021). Some of the studies where the theory of planned behaviour has been modified provide a particularly strong reinforcement of the importance of norms to academic misconduct. The theory of planned behaviour has been modified to include such variables as personality precursors of attitudes and norms (e.g., Stone et al., 2010), additional predictors of intentions (e.g., Uzun & Kilis, 2020), and additional mediators between norms and intentions (e.g., Curtis et al., 2022a; Rajah-Kanagasabai & Roberts,

2015). What these studies reveal about norms is that they typically remain significant predictors of academic misconduct intentions and academic misconduct behaviour even though further variables are also measured and accounted for. To be precise, norms significantly predict academic misconduct intentions and behaviour when also accounting for differences in personality (Stone et al., 2010), mastery motivation and policy knowledge (Jordan, 2001), moral obligation (Chudzicka-Czupała et al., 2016; Uzun & Kilis, 2020), self-control (Curtis et al., 2018), utility and opportunity (Sattler et al., 2013), experiencing negative emotions (Tindall et al., 2021), anticipating negative emotions (Curtis et al., 2022a), behavioural approach and inhibition tendencies (Lonsdale, 2017), and many other variables.

For the most part, studies of the theory of planned behaviour and academic misconduct have only looked at subjective-injunctive norms. However, descriptive norms can be predictive in the theory of planned behaviour (Rivis & Sheeran, 2003). And, some research based on the theory of planned behaviour has revealed that descriptive norms can be influential predictors of academic integrity breaches. Rajah-Kanagasabai and Roberts (2015), for example, included injunctive subjective norms and descriptive norms in a theory of planned behaviour study to predict research misconduct. They found that both forms of norms were significant predictors of justifications for unethical research behaviour, and descriptive norms also significantly predicted unethical behaviour unmediated by justifications and intentions. Curtis et al. (2018) found that descriptive norms predicted intentions to plagiarise in a theory of planned behaviour model in their first study. Their second study included both descriptive and injunctive norms, and both of these predicted plagiarism behaviours directly and mediated by intentions. Still, even outside of studies using the theory of planned behaviour, injunctive norms, such as what students think their professors expect, can influence their engagement in academic misconduct (Simkin & McLeod, 2009).

Returning to the forms of norms defined earlier, the review above shows that both injunctive and descriptive norms can influence the incidence of academic misconduct. In addition, the studies to-date indicate that students are influenced by subjective norms. The influence of objective, explicit, and implicit norms is less clear, as there have been little to no deliberate or systematic analyses, measurements, or manipulations of these norms in studies so far. Evidence of the influence of implicit norms can be indirectly inferred from some research, however. Because the influence of norms can be unconscious, we sometimes see in qualitative studies of academic misconduct that students do not offer norms as a reason for misconduct (e.g., Devlin & Gray, 2007), even though their influence is strong when norms are explicitly measured (cf. Zhao et al., 2022). Such contrasting findings stemming from different methods are consistent with the fact that people can be unaware of their motives (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977) or unaware that they were influenced by others in their peer group (e.g., Goethals & Reckman, 1973). Furthermore, there is some evidence that objective norms are influential on academic misconduct in the form of *cultural norms*.

Cultural Norms

The final form of norms I will discuss in this chapter as a potential influence on academic misconduct is cultural norms. Norms, as discussed so far, have not been differentiated among those that are relatively stable across cultural groups, different within cultural groups, and different between cultural groups. The last of these, the differences in norms between cultural groups, or "cultural norms", has been frequently studied in the context of academic integrity.

Cultural norms have been implicated as a contributor to rates of academic misconduct among students *from*, and students *in*, differing cultures. To unpack this statement, it has been suggested that students *from* some cultures plagiarise and cheat more when they study abroad in other cultures, and students studying *in* some cultures plagiarise and cheat more or less when compared with students studying *in* other cultures. There are three ways in which norms may contribute to any such culture-based difference: (1) norms of educational practices; (2) societal injunctive norms concerning what is acceptable; and (3) societal descriptive norms.

Norms of educational practice may include the promotion of repetitive learning and rote memorization (Maxwell et al., 2006). It has been suggested that such practices are typically more common in Asian than in Western countries (Ehrich et al., 2016). In a qualitative study, an Asian international student in Australia suggested that a rote learning norm was prevalent among their fellow Asian international students, which may have contributed to plagiarism among this group (Devlin & Gray, 2007). Ehrich et al. (2016) found that attitudes to plagiarism were more permissive among a sample of students in China than among a sample of Chinese students in Australia. Another study of Chinese students found that the strongest predictors of plagiarism were beliefs that there was a "standard" correct answer, and that it was important to imitate experts (James et al., 2019). Thus, it appears that norms of how education and study should occur may foster practices that could be interpreted as misconduct, such as plagiarism, in some cultures.

Although a norm of educational practice may lead students to study or approach assessment in ways that lead to breaches of academic integrity, there is also evidence suggesting that they can unlearn these norms in a new culture. Maxwell et al. (2006, 2008) found little evidence of differences in the attitudes regarding, and prevalence rates of, plagiarism comparing domestic Australian students with Asian international students who were studying in Australia. They contend that the Asian students in their study, who were surveyed after at least one semester of studying in Australia, may have adapted to the local institutional expectations. If this explanation is correct, then students' previous behaviours based on instructional and assessment norms were overridden by the newer norms of expected behaviour that they were exposed to.

The evidence above suggests that both cultural-based norms or educational practice and injunctive norms may influence students between and within cultures to act with more or less academic integrity as defined by a Western standard.

However, standards of what is acceptable practice, of course, vary between cultures. In addition, the descriptive normative rates of academic misconduct in some cultures may reinforce high or low rates of misconduct. Such descriptive norms can be self-perpetuating, such that we see reliable cultural differences. For example, Awdry (2021) reported results from a multi-nation survey of contract cheating in which she found that students in the nations with the highest rates of self-reported cheating also reported the highest rates of peer cheating.

Still, the influence of norms is not always linear and may be influenced by cultural values. A number of studies have found differing influences of norms in different cultures (Locke et al., 2017). For example, Enker (1987), looked at both attitudes and norms as predictors of academic misconduct among students in Israel and the United States. She found that norms predicted engagement in academic misconduct among students from both countries, but attitudes only predicted misconduct among the American students. A potential explanation for this finding is cultural collectivism vs. individualism. Israel is a more collectivist country than the United States, and norms may be more influential on behaviour in collectivistic societies whereas personal attitudes are more influential within individualistic nations (Locke et al., 2017). Supporting this idea, in a theory of planned behaviour study across seven countries, subjective norms were mostly stronger predictors of academic misconduct in more collectivistic than individualistic nations (Chudzicka-Czupała et al., 2016).

Zhao et al.'s (2022) review agreed that collectivism moderates the effect of norms on academic cheating, concluding that the relationship was weaker in more individualistic countries. In addition, they examined cultural value dichotomies that are described in the highly-influential work of Hofstede (1980) and found that several other cultural values moderated the relationship between norms and cheating. Specifically, the relationship was stronger in countries with lower uncertainty avoidance and higher power distance, but unaffected by cultural masculinity vs. femininity. Thus, cultural norms influence the strength of the relationship between perceived peer cheating norms and individual students' decisions to cheat.

In this section, I have discussed the potential for national and ethnic cultural norms to influence students' academic integrity behaviour. As a final note, it is worth pointing out that institutional or organisational culture within a higher education provider can also influence academic integrity behaviour (Yahr et al., 2009). Organisational culture includes a set of shared norms with any institution, but, because organisational culture exists within broader national cultures, these norms tend to be shaped by broader societal norms within which institutions exist. Happily, despite the variety and sources of norms that may increase academic misconduct, evidence suggests that norms can be used for good as a tool to reduce academic misconduct.

Using Norms to Combat Academic Misconduct

Given that norms are highly influential on students' tendency to engage in academic misconduct, and academic misconduct is undesirable, it makes sense to consider how to use norms to reduce students' engagement in academic misconduct. Again, the distinction between descriptive and injunctive norms is useful to consider as both may be co-opted in the fight against academic misconduct.

Researchers have suggested using the power of both injunctive and descriptive norms, rather than just one, in holistic approaches to tackle academic dishonesty. McCabe et al. (2006), for example, note that policy can play a role in setting standards of acceptable practice (i.e., policy can set the injunctive norm). At the same time, they suggest that students observing their peers pledging to uphold academic integrity standards would create a further normative pressure (this time potentially both descriptive and injunctive) to avoid academic misconduct. A similar practice has been advocated more recently by Lancaster (2022) as a strategy for reducing contract cheating. He suggests that students should be involved in anti-cheating campaigns to communicate to other students that cheating is not an acceptable behaviour among their peers. Moreover, McCabe et al. (2006) also contend that reducing the instances of successful cheating, e.g., via assessment security, will reduce the incentive to cheat. In other words, weakening the descriptive norm is another possible approach.

Drawing on behavioural ethics theories, Simola (2017) suggests that academic misconduct may be reduced by "renorming" in the form of re-setting students' subjective descriptive norms. While McCabe et al. (2006) had argued that objective descriptive norms could be changed by objectively reducing academic misconduct, Simola's (2017) position implies that making students subjectively believe the descriptive norm of misconduct was lower would have much the same effect. In particular, it makes sense to alert students to very low levels of serious cheating to mark it as an aberrant behaviour (Rundle et al., 2020).

Institutions, educators and students can spread a positive message about academic integrity, effectively communicating an injunctive norm to students about what behaviour is valued. Research findings, however, suggest that at times the particular source of descriptive and injunctive norms differentially affects their influence. Lonsdale (2017), for example, found that peer-based injunctive norms regarding academic misconduct were more influential on students than the students' parents' attitudes. In contrast, Engler and Landau (2011) found that students believed descriptive norms regarding plagiarism and cheating are more credible if they come from their professor than from another student.

Conclusion

People can be swept along by crowds to do the wrong thing, which might be described as mad, and to do the right thing, which might be described as wise. The research and theory discussed in this chapter suggests that in the context of academic integrity students follow both the madness and the wisdom of crowds. Norms are a powerful influence on students' tendency to both engage and not engage in academic misconduct. Various form of norms may contribute to students' engagement in plagiarism and cheating, and research is still to fully deconstruct whether different forms of norms have greater or lesser impacts.

A wider lesson from this chapter is that the behaviour of people in society is important to the behaviour of others. Norms are particularly powerful influences on people's behaviour, even when they do not realise it. As the quote from Boyle (2022) at the start of the chapter states, people are tragically predictable in groups, and one reason for this is that we tend to follow norms. However, in the social context people can redirect and reshape that same context for others by their own choices as to how they behave. In other words, although people are influenced by norms their own choices, particularly those that resist norms, contribute to norms evolving and influencing others to behave differently. As Surowiecki (2005) suggested, in a group, the wisest outcomes can be found when people think for themselves. Starting with an awareness of what norms are regarding academic integrity within an educational context, efforts to change those norms for the better are likely to have powerful and lasting effects.

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