Ethnicity, Acculturation, and Plagiarism: A Criterion Study of Unethical Academic Conduct

Martin, Daniel E; Rao, Asha; Sloan, Lloyd R. Human Organization 70.1 (Spring 2011): 88-96.

Abstract (summary)
Ethics have received increased attention from the media and academia in recent years. Most reports suggest that one form of unethical conduct—plagiarism—is on the rise in the business schools. Stereotypes of Asian students as being more prone to plagiarize are frequently found in the literature, though not concretely substantiated. This study used a behavioral criterion to examine the relationships among ethnicity, acculturation, and plagiarism in a sample of 158 undergraduate and graduate students. Significant differences in plagiarism behavior were found based on level of student acculturation, but not ethnicity. Considerations and implications for training and managing international students and workers are discussed. [PUBLICATION ABSTRACT]

Introduction
Given the growing media attention business ethics have received in recent years, a substantial push towards incorporating ethics courses and standards into the business education curriculum has occurred internationally. More specifically, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) has...
included a requirement for business schools to include ethics components (if not courses) in curriculum to attain or receive continuing accreditation from this certifying body (Griffith 2006). While the question as to whether ethics can be learned at the undergraduate or the graduate level of education has yet to be answered, ethics classes have become standard in business schools.

Academic dishonesty comes in different forms, including providing another individual with answers to a test, providing copies of past exams and assignments to current students, or looking over another student's shoulder during a test to copy an answer. Plagiarism is a form of unethical behavior familiar to educators, administrators, and students that seems rampant in academia today. The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2006) has defined plagiarism as follows: "to commit literary theft: present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source."

In the global arena, we find that ethics have an even greater relevance in both education and industry. Students, professors, and managers struggle to reconcile cultural differences and understand why they occur. In this study, we examine the relationships between ethnicity, acculturation, and plagiarism among university students. Our goal is to determine whether there are differences in the amount of plagiarism across ethnic groups and whether students' acculturation to western educational cultural norms affect their behavior. This study improves on prior research regarding plagiarism that has been based on self-report data by using a strong criterion variable - actual plagiarism by students. This study has implications for professors and those interacting with different ethnic groups and seeks to modify their behavior to create uniform codes of ethics, as well as programs that prepare students for study overseas.

Literature Review

Causes of Plagiarism

Prior researchers (Council of Writing Program Administrators, 2003; Whitley 1998) have identified many potential reasons for plagiarizing. For example, students may not be confident of their writing skills, they may lack sufficient time to execute assignments, they may have a positive attitude towards cheating, they might anticipate rewards from success, or they may be ignorant of how to properly cite others' work. The cost of plagiarism is high because it turns professors into policing agents, ultimately costing time and effort that does not benefit the learning environment and misrepresents abusers' personal abilities (Hannabuss 2001). Research has suggested that while students understand that cheating is unethical and are exposed to the consequences of cheating in their academic careers, most acknowledge cheating at some point while in school (Davis et al. 1992).

While academics from several disciplines (e.g., education, business, and psychology) have explored the rationale behind the broader problem of academic cheating, less research has been conducted on plagiarism specifically. Previous studies have identified demographic and individual differences, as well as some situational factors that are related to academic cheating (Crown and Spiller 1998). However, most studies have used self-reported measures of cheating, which limits the viability of data because of the social desirability associated with self-report criterion variables (Lawson 2004; Martin, Rao, and Sloan 2009). When considering the viability of research on ethics and dishonesty, the social desirability bias is a serious concern. While the broader construct of cheating covers plagiarism, in the current study we are examining solely plagiarism and not making any inferences about cheating besides plagiarism.

Ethnicity, Culture, and Plagiarism Attitudes

The globalization of education has increased the diversity of the student population in terms of ethnicities and cultures. For example, in 2005 over 5.5 million foreign students enrolled in American universities, most of them from Asia (Open Doors 2005). Student diversity may be reflected in students' behavior and beliefs, group identification, educational expectations, and studying styles. While many complex and culturally related influences may impact plagiarism, the current study focuses on the impact of students' ethnicity and level of acculturation on actual (as opposed to self-reported) plagiarism, thus eliminating the social desirability bias that has hampered previous self-report research.

Culture and Plagiarism

In Western cultures, the behaviors discussed in the previous section may be viewed as cheating, but may not in some other cultures. In a study by Chapman and Lupton (2004), university business students attending schools in their native lands were found to have significantly different perceptions of academic dishonesty, with United States students having a significantly (self-reported) greater likelihood of participating in some form of cheating. One point of commonality across cultures was the similarity in individuals viewing themselves as being less likely to cheat compared to their fellow students (Chapman and Lupton 2004). These findings are consistent with results from a sample of individual managers employed at companies in their home countries who were part-time or past attendees of post-graduate
management programs (Jackson 2001). Across all 10 national groups, sampled managers saw others as being less ethical than themselves (Jackson 2001).

The issue of plagiarism also has received attention in Australia and New Zealand. Pickering and Hornby (2005) surveyed freshmen Chinese and New Zealand students regarding their perceptions of the seriousness of plagiarism across six different scenarios. Chinese students perceived four of the scenarios as significantly less problematic than the New Zealand students. In another study, Introna et al. (2003) found attitudinal differences between Chinese and British students. Chinese students were less prone to see writing a paper for another student as a "somewhat or very serious" offense. Chinese students were also less likely to perceive plagiarizing from the Internet as a "somewhat or very serious" offense. Importantly, Introna et al. (2003) introduced several other factors that contribute to plagiarism behavior, specifically the financial pressure to succeed, a sense of alienation (see also Whitley 1998), and perceptions of the moral significance of plagiarism. Marshall and Garry (2006) also found significant differences in understanding and participating in plagiarism between native English and non-native English speaking students in a New Zealand sample. The above studies reflect the need to perform criterion-related research to avoid the bias associated with self-evaluation.

Several studies have attempted to decipher the link between unethical behaviors and culture, using some of Hofstede's (1992) cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism and the degree of uncertainty avoidance (UI). Some of this research has supported the assumption that people who score higher on UI are more likely to cheat. Several studies have compared students in the United States with Hong Kong (Chapman and Lupton 2004) and the United Kingdom (Salter, Guffey, and McMillan 2001). The United States culture represents low uncertainty avoidance and high individualism, Hong Kong has a high uncertainty avoidance and high collectivism culture, while the United Kingdom represents high individualism with relatively lower uncertainty avoidance than in the United States. In both comparative studies, United States students were found to have a greater tendency to cheat than students in Hong Kong or the United Kingdom, negating the assumption that high UI would lead to more plagiarism.

In a lively discussion of the impact of culture and multilingual students in higher education, Sowden (2005) and Liu (2005) debated the impact of national origin, ethnicity, culture, and acculturation. First, both researchers (and Ha 2006) acknowledged a stereotype of Asian students being prone to plagiarize due to educational and cultural expectations. Sowden described an Asian educational perspective in which students copied "experts" because exact reproduction of expert knowledge was expected, as opposed to making a unique contribution through a consideration of the topics presented. Importantly, Sowden considered the multilingual students as responding to their host culture based on their own cultural educational expectations and offered a typology that described three specific groups of students: (1) those that maintained identification with their heritage culture, (2) those who embraced both their heritage culture and the host culture, and (3) those who identified strongly with the host culture.

Sowden argued that students in the first group (i.e., those with strong heritage identification) would tend to be resistant to educational change and more prone to plagiarize based on cultural norms. He also argued that students in the third group (i.e., those with strong identification with the host culture) would adapt to the new educational environment and be less prone to plagiarize. Accordingly, he presented the normal response of universities in the case of plagiarism to encourage students to assimilate to the cultural educational norms of their respective institutions.

Liu (2005) countered that Sowden's arguments were based on inaccurate information provided by English as a Second Language students (ESL) who had been found plagiarizing. Liu also addressed the long historical recognition of the concept of plagiarism as being negative in Chinese literature. He examined six Chinese composition texts that described plagiarism as being unacceptable and spoke to the problematic overgeneralization in Sowden's arguments, specifically regarding the impact of memorization techniques and uncritical acceptance of authorities' perspectives.

Importantly, Liu referred to the difficulty in understanding why students actually plagiarize. He contended that parsing out English language ability, cultural education background, and acculturation may be too difficult to form a basis for beneficial pedagogical contributions. In a response to both Sowden and Liu, Ha (2006) also considered some of the impact of educational practices construed as "normal" in one culture and "plagiarism" in another. For example, Vietnamese universities offer students the opportunity to present full bibliographies without textual references, where as this would be considered plagiarism in the United Kingdom or the United States.

Other issues come into play for international students. One significant issue addressed by Sowden (2005) and Liu (2005) is the impact of different education models on behavior. For example, the Chinese educational system exemplifies Confucian culture, in which students are expected to respect authorities, and the student-teacher relationship is hierarchical. Holmes' (2004) study summarized this educational
Ethnicity, Acculturation, and Plagiarism: A Criterion Study of Unethical Academic Cond...  Page 4 of 11

style as "conserving and surfaced" learning, valuing tradition and authority more than originality, as opposed to the western Socratic style of "extended and deep" learning. Accustomed to their previous education experiences, many international students may lack the skills to adjust to a different system, in which coursework assessments are weighted more than memorizing-style exams, and critical thinking is important and valued. A second, related issue is the cultural difference in perceptions of what is and what is not academic dishonesty raised by a closer examination of international education models. Hayes and Introna (2005) studied and compared Chinese, Indian, Malaysian, Greek, and British students perspectives on plagiarism and academic cheating while they were studying in the United Kingdom. British students sometimes unintentionally plagiarized because they had lost track of references under deadlines and pressure, but they were clear on what constituted plagiarism. Students across cultures were not clear about how much copying was acceptable, and whether "patchwriting" (borrowing from a multitude of written resources and rewriting) was plagiarizing. Many believed copying a few sentences word for word was not cheating or was too trivial to count. As previously noted, for both native and non-native speakers, language proficiency played a role in plagiarism. The study has found that "plagiarism is not a simple matter of cheating, but an outcome of many complex and diverse reasons" (Hayes and Introna 2005). The authors also concluded that international students plagiarized because they (1) were alienated by the testing system, (2) lacked training and skills to form their own opinions and relied on or respected the authorities on the topic, (3) had mismatched skills from different educational systems (textbook-based approaches and recall-type exams), and (4) had issues with language, as well as family and financial pressures to do well in school.

Holmes (2004) found that Chinese students are prone to plagiarism because of their cultural beliefs, previous educational culture, and difficulty with English. Robinson and Kuin (1999) also found that Chinese students in foreign universities, as well as those at Chinese institutions, plagiarize for such reasons as having a misconception of plagiarism and/or experiencing pressure to succeed academically. Barrett and Cox (2005) found that European students plagiarize because of being unclear on the concept of plagiarism and having a lack of reinforcement from universities. Their research supported the aforementioned correlation between plagiarism and such factors as personal characteristics, culture, intrinsic motivation, and universities' reinforcement policy.

While research on the impact of culture on academic cheating has been limited, the findings have been generally consistent, which led us to conduct criterion-oriented research.

Our review of the above literature led to our hypotheses that:

Hypothesis 1. Students will plagiarize on assignments irrespective of their ethnicity.

Hypothesis 2. Students from Asian cultures will plagiarize more than their American peers.

Acculturation and Plagiarism

Acculturation plays an important role in an individuals' group identity and has an impact on their behavior. There are numerous models of acculturation. Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) defined acculturation as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups." Berry et al. (1989) proposed a model to describe the ways individuals relate to the dominant culture. They identify four acculturation strategies of assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization as follows:

Assimilation, which is when individuals adhere to the other culture's values;

Separation, in which individuals adhere to their own cultural values and reject the other culture's norms;

Integration, which is the acceptance of both sets of cultural norms to a greater degree; and

Marginalization, which is the rejection of both sets of cultural norms.

In this study, we use a bidimensional model of acculturation that examines whether the individuals adhered to their native "heritage" culture or adapted to the (Northern American) mainstream, as measured by the Vancouver Index of Acculturation (VIA). The VIA (Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus 2000) is a brief instrument (20 questions) designed to expose two independent dimensions of acculturation corresponding to old and new culture identification, each displaying distinct patterns of non-inverse correlations with personality, self-identity, and psychosocial adjustment. Referencing the earlier discussion by Sowden (2005) on identification with heritage and host cultures, we offer the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 3. The stronger the Asian students identification with their parent (heritage) culture, the greater their tendency to plagiarize more.
* 3a. Length of stay in the United States for Asian students will be inversely related to heritage identification.

* 3b. Differences will be found between plagiarism and non-plagiarism groups, with those strongly identifying with heritage cultures plagiarizing significantly more than others.

Methods

Participants

Participants' ages ranged from 21 to 50-plus, the majority being between 21 and 25 (70%). Approximately 58 percent of the students were female and about 42 percent were male. The majority were undergraduate students (79%). Students from a range of ethnicities responded, Asian and Caucasian students being the largest groups in the sample, with the entire sample being business students (undergraduate or MBA students). Each participant provided one research paper for class credit that was evaluated for plagiarism using Turnitin. Participation was voluntary and the instruments were administered via an online survey package at three different points during the quarter to ensure that students did not suffer fatigue. Descriptive statistics are also presented for the plagiarism variable (i.e., did or did not plagiarize). After carefully screening the research papers, 61 percent of students were found to have plagiarized (at the aforementioned 3% cut). Sample statistics and percentages of plagiarism committed by students with various demographic characteristics are provided in Table 1.

Instruments

Acculturation. The Vancouver Index of Acculturation (VIA) (Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus 2000) is an instrument (20 questions) designed to provide independent measures of identification with mainstream and with heritage cultures in order to determine the level of overall ethnic identity. The bidimensional measure exposes two independent dimensions of acculturation corresponding to old and new culture identification, which display distinct patterns of non-inverse correlations with personality, self-identity, and psychosocial adjustment. The two scales in the VIA yielded acceptable Cronbach's alphas of .79 for the heritage scale and .75 for the mainstream scale (#=158). Demographic variables. Students provided the following personal information: ethnicity, gender, and length of time in the United States.

Plagiarism. Turnitin.com is an online plagiarism evaluation system provided to faculty to prevent students from attempting to pass others’ work off as their own. Student papers that are uploaded into the system are evaluated by comparing the text to an internal database consisting of student papers previously submitted in any university using Turnitin, the ProQuest database of academic journals, and content available on the Internet. Within a few minutes, the system provides originality reports giving the percentage of words matched in the above, along with where the materials had been found. Approximately 40,000 student papers per day are turned in by students to this commercial site, and Turnitin has claimed that 30 percent of them contain plagiarism (Turnitin, 2006). We manually screened the papers to ensure that the system excluded quotations, references, and other bibliographic materials when assessing whether they contained plagiarism.

Based on a thorough review of the Turnitin software’s capabilities for detecting plagiarism, we conservatively identified our cut-off point for defining the presence of plagiarism as 3 percent of the text in the paper having been plagiarized (see below).

Procedures

The first class meeting of each quarter in which the study was conducted was spent reviewing class expectations and university guidelines regarding plagiarism. Students were advised that plagiarism would not be tolerated, and when recognized, it would result in a failing grade for the course, being reported to the university administration, as well as potentially being expelled from the university. The syllabi for the classes also contained this information regarding plagiarism.

Students uploaded their papers to the Turnitin system. Based on our previous discussion of the system, we individually removed all cited, quoted, and bibliographic references and checked for potential errors in Turnitin’s categorization of cheating behavior. One research paper (the first paper given in the quarter) for each student was used to establish student plagiarism. The paper itself asked students to describe the differences between affirmative action and diversity concepts. Credit was given based on participation (not on proportion or existence of plagiarism, which prevented a majority of the class from failing - see below). We individually removed all cited, quoted, and bibliographic references, as well as check for potential errors in categorizing cheating behavior by Turnitin (2006). Based on a thorough review of the Turnitin software’s capabilities in detecting plagiarism, and that the average length of the paper being two single spaced pages with 12 font Times New Roman (the assignment length), we conservatively identified our cut-off point for the presence of plagiarism at 3 percent of the paper being plagiarized (or about 30 words in a row). Each student could submit only one research paper for review. Again, per
suggestions of the Turnitin manual, we removed all cited, quoted, and bibliographic references from the calculation of the originality score. Student confidentiality was maintained by the removal of all identification (names and student identification numbers) after the plagiarism data had been linked to the survey data.

Results

We found substantial support for Hypothesis 1, that students would plagiarize irrespective of ethnic culture. Approximately 61 percent of our population plagiarized (TV=1 1 8), while approximately 15 percent (N=29) did not. These results are important because they suggest that the current overreliance on self-reported measures of plagiarism are flawed due to self-bias and social desirability, with a significant underestimation of plagiarism.

Descriptive statistics for the VIA scales and the Originality reports (percentage of the paper actually plagiarized) as well as years in the United States for both of our target populations are provided in Table 2. Given the fact that the Turnitin Originality reports are bounded by zero and defined as ratios, we confirmed skewness. As such, we performed a log transformation on the originality reports. The originality variable ranged from zero to 65 percent, with a standard deviation of 12.23.

To establish the relationships between the two dimensions of acculturation - heritage and mainstream identification - and plagiarism behavior, we ran bivariate correlations. Given our focus on Asian and White students, we ran separate correlations for the two groups (see Table 3).

Hypothesis 2 was not substantiated. The implicit hypothesis that Asian students plagiarize more than other students is that ethnic identity is used as faculty as a proxy for individual learning strategies and subsequent behavior.

Significant correlations between the log-transformed originality and heritage identity (.44) suggest that Asian students with higher scores on the heritage identity scale of the VIA had larger proportions of plagiarism in their assignment. No significant correlations were found between either heritage or mainstream orientations and the log-transformed originality score for White students. These findings support Hypothesis 3 and offer insights into the mediating impact of acculturation on plagiarism behavior.

Hypothesis 3a was supported by the negative correlation (-.27) between length of stay in the United States and heritage identification in Asian students. The result seems to support one aspect of the general theory of acculturation, indicating that the longer individuals remain in a culture, the greater the changes that occur in their cultural identification.

To further support an interpretation that the relationship reflecting the support of hypothesis 3a was in fact the result of acculturation (identification with heritage culture) and not the amount of time spent in the United States, correlations partialling out the number of years that participants had lived in the United States were run. The results offer further support of hypothesis 3a with significant relationships established between the amount plagiarized and heritage identification when partialling out years spent in the United States (see Table 4).

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test hypothesis 3b, with individual level of acculturation (Heritage and Mainstream identification) serving as the dependent variables and both plagiarism group (dichotomous did or did not) and ethnicity (Asian or White) serving as the fixed factors for the MANOVA.

Using Wilks' criterion, we found a moderate (Plagiarism partial ?2= .111) association between the dependent variables and the main effect. Table 5 provides a summary of the significant Multivariate Wilks' Lambda test.

To identify significant main effects and interactions using the MANOVA, the results of the MANOVA between-subjects effects tests were analyzed further (see Table 5). Significant interactions were found between the plagiarism and nonplagiarism and Asian and White groups for the Heritage scale, but not the mainstream scale. Thus, the results of the Heritage scale suggested a confirmation of Hypotheses 3b, which stated that students identifying with their heritage culture would plagiarize more often. (The tests of between-subjects effects in Table 6 and mean differences in Table 7 offer significance and directionality between the groups). We discuss the ramifications and possible cultural divides among managers, employees, faculty, administration, and students regarding plagiarism in the discussion section.

Discussion

This study sought to validate and extend previous research on students' cheating behavior. An important contribution of our research is that we used a valid criterion variable, actual plagiarism by students, instead of self-reported plagiarism when examining plagiarism's relationship to ethnicity and acculturation. A constant stream of research has shown that students report plagiarizing, but these
reports and statistics are colored by self-report bias. By using samples of student work tracked by a program like Turnitin, we provide more objective support for the plagiarism phenomenon by finding that 61 percent of students plagiarized from documented sources.

We further sought to determine who plagiarized and explored the relationships among ethnicity, acculturation, and plagiarism. Commonly held faculty stereotypes, qualitative discussions amongst experts (Ha 2006; Liu 2005; Sowden 2005), and some research on cultural attitudes to plagiarism (Introna et al. 2003) have supported the belief that Asian students plagiarize more than others because of their home cultural educational norms and poorer English language skills. In this study measuring actual behavior, we find that Asians do not plagiarize more than other students, thus, disconfirming the stereotype.

Acculturation, rather than mere ethnicity, is more strongly associated with plagiarism. The more students identify with their heritage culture, the more they plagiarize, validating Sowden's (2005) argument that acculturation, rather than ethnicity, is a stronger predictor of plagiarism. Prior research gives us some indications as to why this phenomenon occurs. Whitley (1998) included both alienation and learning orientation as predictors of students' attitudes towards cheating and perceptions of norms that impact their intention to cheat. Hence, students who are not acculturated are potentially more alienated and also have a less accurate perception of local norms (Hayes and Introna 2005). Again, this study provides empirical support to formerly theoretical arguments linking acculturation and plagiarism and suggests that racial identity is a poor proxy for individual differences and psychological characteristics.

Implications

These findings raise further questions and have implications for both students and faculty in management education.

Student Education

Given that we now have tools such as Turnitin to track it, a student's ability to successfully plagiarize is reduced. Applying Whitley's (1998) framework, in which the ability to cheat and the risk of detection determine the student's willingness to cheat, providing specific feedback to the students through their originality reports on Turnitin will reduce student plagiarism (Martin 2005). Applying more basic frameworks of motivation, we know that specific, directed feedback has a strong impact on behavior (Moss and Sanchez 2004). When students see their work marked up with clear identification of specific content that has been plagiarized and the percentage of work plagiarized, we believe that it will deter plagiarism.

We also recommend that students, especially international students, be provided training on library research and searching electronic databases. Baron and Strout-Drapez (2001) surveyed 123 United States universities and concluded that adjusting to a new educational and library system was one of the three main challenges faced by international students, along with general cultural adjustment and communications. By providing clear training, both local and foreign students can develop the necessary skills to conduct appropriate library research. For foreign students in particular, such training will increase their understanding of mainstream cultural norms and facilitate cross-cultural adjustment and acculturation. Foreign students are placed in a stressful, often hostile environment that challenges their core educational expectations, and they are expected to transform themselves without being given the tools to adapt to their new culture (Handa and Power 2005). As such, they may rely on counterproductive educational tactics that are accepted by their heritage culture. Some students do not understand some or all aspects of plagiarism because little time is spent discussing this topic, and definitions are lacking or are not actively presented. Handa and Power (2005) described this as being required to play a new game without knowing the rules. One suggested approach to dealing with plagiarism is to demonstrate the "game" by showing students the actual impact of "patchwork" and other plagiarism tactics to ensure they see a clear relationship between their actions and academic punishments. This training could be analogous to expatriate training, where differences in systems and behavior are linked to cultural norms that differ between nations, and students are given hands-on library workshops in avoiding plagiarism (Baron and Strout-Drapez 2001). With an understanding of differences between learning systems, differing success criteria in the systems, and opportunities to both practice and compare/contrast the systems, international students will be better able to follow the norms of their host culture. This kind of practical training is essential because international students contribute financially to educational institutions and often become part of the host nations' skilled labor pool (Open Doors 2005).

Faculty Education

Our findings lead to suggestions regarding faculty education on stereotypes, as well as identifying and resolving plagiarism. Despite research evidence to the contrary (Ha 2006; Peppas 2002), the stereotype...
persists that Asian students plagiarize more often than their mainstream American peers. Our study categorically finds no difference in plagiarism rates based on ethnicity. We suggest that this kind of information be included in faculty orientation programs so that faculty can confront their own stereotypes. Given that Asians are a racially visible minority, cases of plagiarism by a few Asian students are potentially more salient than that by the majority. An understanding of their stereotypes and the research evidence to the contrary will help faculty steer clear of bias wherein Asian students are often required to prove their integrity to faculty (Handa and Power 2005). When we presented our findings at a premier management conference, we were surprised to note that educators continued to give us examples of Asians plagiarizing, despite the statistical proof we provided to the contrary.

Faculty also need training on using tools that make it easier to track plagiarism, provide feedback, and disseminate university norms on plagiarism. We recommend that faculty orientation provide guidance on using Turnitin or similar programs and on providing student feedback. Faculty also must develop uniform norms based on the university guidelines so that students clearly understand what constitutes plagiarism and its consequences. If one faculty member fails students for lifting a string of five words or more from a source without attribution (our university guideline), while another ignores it, students do not learn the rules of ethical conduct, but resent faculty who enforce it. As Whitley (1998) noted, students cheat when they think they will succeed in doing so. By providing training on easier tracking methods and uniform guidelines, we will reduce their probability of success.

Conclusions, Limitations, and Suggestions for Further Research

In sum, this study contributes to the literature on the impact of acculturation and ethnic identity on plagiarism by using actual plagiarism to establish relationships previously linked through theory and self-report measures. Importantly, the cheating literature has been previously defined to include a broad range of behavior such as copying test answers from other students, plagiarism, taking professors' academic materials, and sharing test results. A clear lack of criterion variables is evident in the academic cheating literature, emphasizing a continued need for new criterion approaches in understanding cheating behavior. This study addressed the above limitations by strictly defining the cheating behavior (plagiarism) and providing a strong criterion variable, Turnitin, that is not susceptible to self-report bias. The study examined ethnic cultural differences found in previous research and stereotypes held by faculty to discover that there are no significant ethnic differences between Asian and White student groups engaging in plagiarism. However we do find that plagiarism decreases with lowered identification with heritage culture, indicating that as students identify more with the mainstream culture, they tend to follow the rules of the culture by reducing their plagiarism.

While we had relatively small samples of the target populations, our significant results suggest that future research should establish the impact of culture and individual differences on plagiarism behavior. There are several critical reasons to continue this stream of research. First, this stream of research can be used to give us critical insights into unethical behavior, the ethics determination process, and subsequent translation into behavior. Second, by understanding plagiarism behavior, we can give administrators and professors the tools they need to work with diverse student bodies to ensure that ethical standards are clear and that students comply with these standards. Third, we can critically examine and differentiate plagiarism behavior from other types of unethical behavior that are often vaguely defined in the cheating literature.

References

References
Barrett, Ruth, and Cox, Anna
Baron, Sara, and Strout-Dapaz, Alexia
Berry, John, Kim, Uichol, Power, S., Young, M. and Bujaki, M.
Chapman, Kenneth, and Lupton, Robert
Council of Writing Program Administrators
Crown, Deborah. F., and Spiller, M. Shane
Davis, Stephen, Grover, Cathy, Becker, Angela and McGregor, Loretta
Griffith, Amy
Ha, P. Le
Handa, Neera, and Power, Clare
Hannabuss, Stuart
Hayes, Niall, and Introna, Lucas
Hofstede, Geert
Holmes, Prue
Introna, Lucas, Hayes, Niall, Blair, Lynne and Wood, Elspeth
2003 Cultural Attitudes Towards Plagiarism. Lancaster University. URL: <http://www.jiscpas.ac.uk> (September 12, 2007).
Jackson, Terrence
Lawson, Raef
Liu, Dilin
Martin, Daniel, Rao, Asha, Sloan, Lloyd.
2006 Entry for Plagiarizing. URL:<http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/plagiarizing> (September 1, 2007).
Moss, Sherry, and Sanchez, Juan
Open Doors
Peppas, Spero
Pickering, John, and Hornby, Garry
Redfield, Robert, Linton, Ralph and Herskovits, Melville
Robinson, Viviane and Kuin, Lai
Ryder, Andrew, Alden, Lynn and Paulhus, Delroy
Salter, Stephen, Guffey, Daryl and McMillan, Jeffrey
Sowden, Colin
Turnitin
Whitley, Bernard

AuthorAffiliation
Daniel E. Martin is Associate Professor, Department of Management, California State University, East Bay. Asha Rao is Professor, Department of Management, California State University, East Bay. Lloyd R. Sloan is Professor, Department of Psychology, Howard University. The authors thank Don McCabe and three anonymous Academy of Management 2007 conference reviewers for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Copyright Society of Applied Anthropology Spring 2011
The following essay, "Anorexia: The Cheating Disorder," focuses on one of the critical issues in the relationship between teacher and student: the question of honesty. Its author, Richard Murphy, an assistant professor of English at Radford University in Radford, Virginia, also provides an example in this essay of honestly examining experience in which his own responses were complex and not necessarily to his liking.

Here he explores the tricky question of students' cheating in the classroom: in the case of his class, of their plagiarizing their work—using someone else's printed words as their own. We learn that the teacher's ability to detect copied writing may not always be accurate.

Through two stories from separate times and classes, he attempts to convey the perversity of plagiarism, and the ways in which it can destroy a critical sense of trust on both the teacher's and student's part. His first story involves the student who has written about a story by James Joyce in The Dubliners entitled "The Dead." Don't worry if you have temporary trouble following Murphy's description of inconsistent sentence structure in that student's essay. You'll soon arrive at a sentence that makes everything clear: "So stark is the contrast between the two [sentences] that it was difficult for me to imagine the same person writing both" (p. 124).

Professor Murphy is working on a book of autobiographical essays on teaching entitled The Calculus of Intimacy.

I wanted to pray. A part of me would not let myself ask Him for help. I did it to myself. God understood my confusion. I tried to figure out why it was happening to me, and how. It only happens to weak girls, girls who have no self-control, girls who are caught up with society's standards—not me. But was I one of them? It was happening to me, just like the cases I read about in magazines.

This is the first paragraph of an essay I received from a young woman purporting to describe her own experience with anorexia nervosa. Before I had finished reading, I understood the mystery of her yearning to be thin. In her world, thinness was a substitute for love.
reading one page, I suspected it was plagiarized. I cannot easily explain my
hunch. Something curred about the writing, its confessional sentiment exactly
like the cases in the magazines. I ran a quick search through the
Library Index in the library and then through recent issues of Teen, McCall's, Glamour, and
Madame, we: In a half-hour, I had six articles: "Anorexia Nearly Killed Me," "Starving Oneself to Death," "Starving for Attention," "Two Teens," "My Sister
like the cases in the magazines. I ran a quick search through
in the library and
plagiarism
readmg
124
125

I did not accuse the student of plagiarism on the evidence of this search, but I decided to talk with her before I would comment on or evaluate her paper. I guessed that in our talk she would reveal that she had copied her essay or in some other way falsified it. She did.
I am not inquiring here into the causes of plagiarism among students nor

Several years before I received the anorexia paper, a student submitted a brief
analysis of James Joyce's "The Dead." As I was reading it, the paper tripped some
wire in my mind. It seemed both accomplished and incompetent, full of discontinuities like those in the following two sentences:

The physical movement of the main character, Gabriel Conroy, from a house
in the western part of the city eastward to a hotel at the very center expresses
in spatial terms his commitment to the ways and the doom of his fellow
Dubliners. His spiritual movement westward, in our imaginative vision, symbolizes his superseness of that doom through recognition of its meaning and
acceptance of this truth of his inward nature.

Much of the first sentence here is sensible; the character's physical movement
expresses his commitment. It is also syntaxically sophisticated. The grammatical
subject, "movement," is sustained through five prepositional phrases before its
meaning is completed by the verb "expresses." The verb itself is modified by a
prepositional phrase ("in spatial terms") that parallels and reiterates the adjective
"physical." The second sentence, however, is nonsense. The grammatical kernel
(movement symbolizes superseness) is unintelligible. The pronoun sequence
creates nothing but blur (his-our-his-that-its-this-his). One sentence, then, is
substantial and coherent. The next is gummed with vagueness. So stark is the
contrast between the two that it was difficult for me to imagine the same person
writing both.

When I had assigned the paper, I explicitly restricted the use of secondary
sources. I asked students to select a short reading from the literature we had been
studying and to write an essay defining and explaining what they considered its
central aesthetic purpose. I asked them to write about the work only as it
presented itself to them in their reading. They were not to read or refer to any
critical or historical background discussions of it.

In spite of the assignment's restriction, however, parts of this student paper
about Gabriel Conroy seemed to me surely to have been copied. I scanned several
library collections of critical essays on Joyce, browsed in longer works that made
reference to Dubliners, and then, without having found anything but still
persuaded the paper was plagiarized, asked the student to come to my office to talk
with me.

"Before I give you credit for this paper," I said, "I need to ask a couple of
questions: Did you use any outside materials when you wrote this? Did you read
any books or articles about Joyce or about this story?"

To both of these questions he answered, "No," simply and firmly. But the look
on his face was perplexed, and I realized once again how difficult it is to confront
plagiarism without proof, how important it is not to accuse a student of cheating
without sufficient cause. I hurried to soften the impression that I thought he had
cheated by saying that my reason for asking was the strange inconsistency in the
paper between specific recounting of the story line and abstract discussion of
thematic issues. I was trying to understand the combination, I said, and I
thought that perhaps he had looked at some outside sources which had influ-
enced what he wrote. He still looked puzzled, but said, "No," again, and our
brief conference ended.

Plagiarism irritates, like a thin wood splinter in the edge of one's thumb. With
any sort of reasonable perspective, I realize that one student's possibly copying
part of one paper on James Joyce is a small matter. In a typical semester, I teach
120 students and read perhaps 600 student papers. In a typical day, I have two
classes to prepare and teach, committee meetings to attend, conferences with
individual students, the utility bill to pay, a child to pick up from a Cub Scout
meeting. But everything I touch rubs the sliver in my thumb and sets its irritation
pulsing. As much as I try, I cannot ignore it.

So when I happened to be sitting in a colleague's office, waiting for her to
finish a phone call, my eye seized upon the book of Joyce criticism on her shelf.
I had to look. It took only a moment. The phrases of the student's jumbled
sentences were everywhere. I borrowed the book, took it back to my office,
double-checked its lines with the lines of the paper, and then went again to the
library.

I wanted to verify that our library collection contained the book and thus that
it had actually been available to the writer. It was checked out. "To whom?" I
asked. The circulation clerk said that library policy prohibited his divulging that
information, but if I wished I could have the book recalled. I did, and reconciled
myself to waiting several days for it to arrive.

In order to make the story complete, I have to explain some of the mixture
of my feeling during this episode. Though I should not have had time to play
detective, I made room among all the duties of my life to pursue this student.
I was thrilled by the chase. When I happened on those sentences in my coll-
league's office, I was exhilarated. They promised the solution to a puzzle that had eluded me. They reinforced my sense of judgment and my sense of self-satisfac-
tion at the thought that, in a small way, I was preserving the integrity of the
university.

I was also dismayed, however, and angry at what I came to feel as the obliga-
to play out this scene, at my exhilaration, at the student's distortion of our whole working relationship. When I thought about his voice, about his poise in denying that he had used any outside sources, I thought too about the other 119 students and wondered what his cheating meant about them. When I went into class in the following days and watched their faces, I realized that I had lost some of my faith in them. For no more reason than my experience with him, I found myself wondering what the rest of them had copied.

The recall notice came shortly afterward. I hurried to the library to pick up the book. When I could not find the sentences I was looking for, I first imagined that I had inadvertently recalled the wrong book. Then I thought that perhaps this was a different edition. I walked away from the circulation desk flipping the pages and wondering—through the electronic gate at the library door, out through the foyer past the philodendrons in their huge pots, onto the columned porch—and then I saw it. The gap in the pagination, page 98 followed immediately by page 113, and, in the fold of the binding so nearly done as to be almost invisible, the seven razor-bladed stumps.

He still denied it, first in my office, then in the Dean of Students' office, sitting with his legs crossed in an upholstered armchair next to a whirring tape recorder. He began by denying that he had even used the book, then that he had damaged it in any way; he went so far as to say that he had noticed the missing pages and reported them to the library himself. He hadn't wanted to be blamed, he said. What kind of person did we think he was, he asked, how did we suppose he had brought up? He was offended at the very thought of it. But when I finally left the hearing room, he admitted to the Dean both that he had copied and that he had cut out the pages he had used. Within the week he was suspended from the university.

Nearly every year I encounter students who cheat in their writing. Their stories are all different, and all the same: they were worried about their school work, rushed, unclear about the assignment, afraid. My stories are all different, and all the same: an intuition, some feeling on the surface of the page, something about the dyes of the ink that whispers this is counterfeit currency; the excitement of a different, and all the others, obsessive and bilious. Like all the others, it has nothing whatever to do with what the job of teaching should be.

"Did this really happen?" I asked my student when we met to talk about her essay on anorexia. She was already nodding yes, when I thought that I shouldn't, she is going somewhere, her father actually rubbed behind her ears would think to mention that specific care. At the same time, the vague and abrupt transitions between these highly individual details seemed to me understandable only if I assumed that she had copied them in fragments from a magazine memoir. My guess was that she had taken them from an article that was too long to copy in its entirety and so had included just selected parts in her essay.

"Did you write this?" I finally asked unexpectedly. I did not plan to say it like that, but I couldn't seem to approach the real point of my questions by just skirting the issue.

"Is this story really about you?"

She paused for a moment and then asked quietly, "What would happen if it weren't?"

I told her that I could not accept such a paper since the assignment was to write about a personal experience of her own. I told her, too, that it would help explain the vagueness I had been trying to point out to her: if she wrote the paper about someone else's experience, then she would be likely to leave gaps in the story that she couldn't fill.
"What grade would I get on it if it were about someone else?" she asked. To pin me down.

"I wouldn’t give it at all. I wouldn’t give you any credit for doing it. It’s not the assignment."

"OK," she said. "It’s not about me. It’s about a friend of mine."

My reaction to this admission was complicated. I had been expecting it, in fact working toward it, trying to get her to tell me where the paper had come from. I was glad to have its pretense uncovered but disappointed because I knew immediately that I would have to accept this substitute explanation though I didn’t believe it either. I was sorry I had not been able to find the magazine story that provided the actual source of her paper and so would have to settle for this second lie about its roots. And I was angry at the immediate shock I would have to accept this substitution explanation though I didn’t believe it either. I was sorry I had not been able to find the magazine story that provided the actual source of her paper and so would have to settle for this second lie about its roots. And I was angry at the whole situation: at the wasted time in the library, at the wasted conference with her, at my own inability to define the fakery of the piece, and at her apparent inability to see the purpose of our work together. I wanted her to write truthfully about her own experience and to use my responses, along with others’, to help her convey the meaning of that experience more surely and vividly. As it was, her paper seemed just a hoax.

The deep flux of such feeling is just one of the dimensions for me of the problem of plagiarism. Another is the comic peculiarity of my claiming to be committed to helping students learn but sometimes spending large chunks of everyone’s time trying to corner them in a fraud. Then there is the distance, the surprising separation I discover in such situations between myself and students. Because I assume their good will and candor and my own, both their cheating and my responses to it shock me. I take for granted that we are working together and thus am amazed each time at the unimagined distance between us.

But even if I had expected the fakery of the anorexia paper, I would not have been prepared for what happened. Even if I had remembered the pages sliced out of the book of Joyce criticism and the self-righteous posturing of that frightened student writer trying to elude me, I would not have anticipated the journal of the woman who had told me that her essay on anorexia was not really about herself but about her friend.

I gave her a zero on the paper. She completed the rest of the semester’s assignments, and at the end of the term, as required, she turned in a binder containing all her work for the course. As I was rereading her finished essays and the background notes and drafts she had made while working on them, I came upon the following entries in her journal:

Feb. 7. My roommates and I did watch the Miss America pageant. I believe pageants are my favorite programs to watch. They are so inspiring. But sometimes that can make you sick.

Feb. 21. The title of Miss America is such a distinguished title. Who ever is chosen for this honor represents the dreams of millions of young girls.

Feb. 22. My next paper I am writing about when I had anorexia. The thought of going all through that again scares me but I think it would be a good experience to write about.

BRIGID SCHULTE

The Case of the Purloined Paper

When it comes to plagiarism, where does borrowing end and cheating begin? And what do we do when students and teachers retain widely different conceptions of what plagiarism involves? Taking up this tricky question, journalist Brigid Schulte offers an overview of current attitudes about academic "cheating" — how we define it, why and when we argue over it, and what this entire discussion says about the changing nature of our educational norms. Brigid Schulte is a journalist who writes for the Metro section of the Washington Post. Her work has also appeared in American Journalism Review. The selection that follows first appeared in the Washington Post on September 23, 2002.

NANCY ABESHOUSE IS EXCITED ABOUT TEACHING HER ADVANCED Placement literature class at Springbrook High School in Montgomery County, Maryland. These are her best students, the class is rigorous enough to count for college credit, and the activity she has planned is one of the intellectual highlights of the year: She's had the class read Henry James's The Turn of the Screw. They've had to write a paper on whether the main character, the governess, really saw ghosts or was just imagining things.

But it turns out not to be such a highlight. The discussion falls flat. Everyone in the class has the same opinion—that James didn't believe in ghosts and was parodying sexually repressed Victorian society. And most of the papers include variations on the same sentence: "Unable to express her desires, she imagines that she sees the ghosts of luckier souls who did express their desires."

After the students file out, Abeshouse is more than suspicious. She goes to her computer, logs on to the Internet, and types bits of the telltale sentence into the search engine Google. It comes on SparkNotes.com, a hipper, online version of Cliffs Notes. "I wanted them to go through an intellectual exercise. And they just wanted the answer," Abeshouse says later. "By our standards, it's cheating. By theirs, it's efficiency."

A teacher for 22 years, Abeshouse has battled the run-of-the-mill copiers and cheaters, and in recent years even the ones who merely change the typeface and turn in their friend's homework. Usually she gives students zeros or sends them to the principal's office for a lecture on plagiarism. This time, since these students are among the best, she wants to teach them a lesson. She downloads the SparkNotes summary of The Turn of the Screw—which, she says, has an "anti-intellectual, cynical, what's-the-bottom-line tone." Then she prints copies of an analysis from a top journal, using letters James wrote to his publisher about the book and historical references to the era. She gives them both to her students and hopes they notice the difference. Or care.

Lately, Abeshouse has become nearly obsessed with how easy the Internet makes it for students to cheat and get away with it. "I've just found a Web site that posts International Baccalaureate-style essays. In different languages," she says, sadly triumphant. But what she may not realize is that the Turn of the Screw incident is just one skirmish in the ongoing cold war of high-tech cheating. "It's like an arms race," says Joe Howley, a student in an elite Montgomery County magnet program who says he heard widespread cheating from the sidelines. "And teachers are always playing catch-up."

Donald McCabe is the founding president of the Center for Academic Integrity at Rutgers University, and his research shows that "academic integrity" is fast becoming an oxymoron. And not just in colleges, where cheating is rampant, he says.

McCabe is finding that cheating is starting younger—in elementary school, in fact. And by the time students hit middle and high school, cheating is, for many, like gym class and lunch period, just part of the fabric of how things are. It isn't that students have become moral reprobates. What has changed, says McCabe, is technology. It has made cheating so easy. The vast realms of information on the Web are so readily available. Who could resist?

Not many do. In McCabe's 2001 survey of 4,500 high school students from 25 high schools around the country, 74 percent said they had cheated at least once on a big test. Seventy-two percent reported serious cheating on a written work. And 97 percent reported at least one questionable activity, such as copying someone else's homework or peeking at someone else's test. More than one-third admitted to repetitive, serious cheating.

And few appeared to feel shame. "You do what it takes to succeed in life," wrote one student. "Cheating is part of high school," said another. Fifteen percent had turned in a paper bought or copied from Internet sources. More than half said they had copied portions of a paper from the Web without citing the source. And 90 percent were indiscriminate copiers, plagiarizing from the Net, from books, magazines, even the old low-tech standard, the World Book encyclopedia.

"Students were certainly cheating before the Internet became available. But now it's easier. Quicker. More anonymous," McCabe says. "I can't
tell you how many high school students say they cheat because others do and it goes unpunished. Being honest disadvantages them."

Besides, most people get away with it. It's easy for students to stay at least one step ahead of their teachers. When teachers began noticing that students would copy from the Internet or from one another and simply change the typeface, students quickly moved on. They discovered the wonders of Microsoft Word's AutoSummarize feature, which can take an entire page and shorten it to highlight the key points.

They think "that we don't know as much about technology as they do," says Carol Wansong, who just retired from teaching high school. "And, of course, we don't. They were born with it."

Even if students are caught, the consequences can be negligible. At some colleges, students who plagiarize are expelled. But a high school student caught plagiarizing may just get a zero for that particular assignment. Often, he or she will be given a chance to make it up for at least partial credit. And there's no mention of it on the all-important transcript that gets sent to colleges. At Bardstown High School in Kentucky last year, 118 seniors were caught copying and pasting members were pulled, and one of those caught cheating remained the class valedictorian.

Plagiarism—a derivative of the Latin word for kidnapping—literally means to steal someone else's words or credit for them. According to the rules of scholarship, if you borrow someone else's words, you put them in quotation marks. If you use someone else's idea, you acknowledge it in your essay or in a footnote.

All this cheating raises an uncomfortable question: Are successful, educated parents putting too much pressure on their children in the belief that going to an elite school buys entree into the good life and attending a lesser school will leave you at a disadvantage?

At Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, Maryland, students answered the question for themselves after a low-tech cheating scandal—the student government president was caught with 150 answers to a final exam hidden in his baseball cap—raised the issue. A junior who wasn't involved in the scandal told the school newspaper that some parents "are under the impression that if you don't do well and your grades aren't top, you'll be lying in a gutter somewhere for the rest of your life."

To Wansong, who taught rigorous International Baccalaureate classes, it's not just that parents put pressure on their children to achieve, it's the attitude that the end justifies whatever means necessary. In the past, she says, she would find one or two students plagiarizing their research project. But in recent years, with the advent of the Internet, it's been more like 12 or 14. "They showed no remorse when they were caught," she says.

"I had students look me right in the eye and say, 'I don't see what the big deal is.' And their parents didn't, either."

That attitude echoed loudly in Kansas last year. When teacher Christine Pelton failed more than two dozen students for plagiarizing from the Internet, their parents complained. The students were given credit for the work. And Pelton quit. (The superintendent who had told Pelton to restore the grades, however, recently resigned.)

One Washington area high school magnet student who plagiarized multiple sources for an essay on Macbeth said he knew what he did was wrong but that he didn't feel had about it. "Remorse," he said, "just slows you down."

John Barrie, a Berkeley biophysics graduate student, wrote software he intended to help students peer-review each other's work. Instead, they were selling each other's papers on the quad. So he rewrote the program to catch plagiarism. And now, that program has become a booming business, with some of the toniest names in public and private schools paying for its services. Turnitin.com scans 10,000 papers a day, half of them from middle and high school students. One-third are plagiarized from the Web. And most, Barrie says, come from high-achieving kids in top-performing schools.

Students responded by shifting tactics. They began taking a sentence here, a paragraph there, in what Barrie calls "mosaic" plagiarism. The students in Abeshouse's class need not have relied solely on SparkNotes. A quick Net search on Henry James and The Turn of the Screw yields obscure essays such as "A Ghost Story" or a "Delve into a Neurotic Mind?"

Barrie says Turnitin.com's software can detect anything copied from the Net down to an eight-word string. What it won't catch is students who crib the ideas, not the words.

One Maryland high school student was stuck on the Hamlet paper due in her AP lit class. So she went to the Internet and found the perfect essay from a site that offered them for free. "I took a good idea that wasn't given much effort in the online paper and put it into my paper with correct grammar and clear sentence structure...Is that wrong?"

Well, yes. "If all a student has done is taken big quotes or paraphrased and more or less pasted together others' opinions, by academic standards, that's plagiarism," Abeshouse says.
For teachers like Abeshouse, the next tactical move in the cheating war is to change the way they teach. Abeshouse has students write more during class. She asks for rough drafts of term papers, annotated bibliographies, summaries of contents, evaluation of sources. "We don’t ask them to summarize a book anymore. Now we ask for comparisons, personal responses, evidence of themes," she says. "Any teacher that says, ‘The term paper is due four weeks from now’ is asking for the kiss of death."

But who will win the wider conflict in the cheating game is anyone’s guess. “It’s naive to think that once a student has a high school or a Harvard diploma that all of a sudden they become an ethical person,” Barrie says. “Where that leads you to is a very ugly society in the future.”

His stolen Macbeth paper long forgotten, the magnet student eagerly packs to go off to a top university. He had applied to six universities, and, with his high grades, had been accepted at all six. With scholarships. "It’s highly conceivable I’ll cheat," he says matter-of-factly. He has no qualms that he will do whatever it takes to succeed.
This is an excerpt from history professor Patrick Allitt’s rather entertaining book *I’m the Teacher, You’re the Student* which was published by University of Pennsylvania in 2005.

**Plagiarism**

One of the sorrows of a professor’s life, closely related to the assigning and grading of papers, is plagiarism. We have here a bizarre system for dealing with it. Professors are not allowed to confront students they suspect of cheating. Instead they must report their suspicions to the Honor Council, which sends a student representative who interviews the professor for the evidence. The Honor Council notifies the student and schedules a hearing, which often takes place several weeks later. At the hearing, the accused sits at a big table along with the members of the Honor Council, all of whom are also undergraduates. One (nonvoting) faculty advisor is also present. Witnesses are called in one by one, who give their evidence and leave. The accused makes a statement, answers
questions, and brings in witnesses of his own (including character witnesses to vouch for his inner goodness). Then the accused leaves and the Honor Council deliberates. It needs a unanimous verdict of guilty to convict; if there is a conviction the council then decides on a sanction. The sanctions tend to be mild, sometimes merely requiring the student to actually do the work he or she was supposed to do in the first place, but could include an F for the course or even expulsion. Even then the sanction doesn’t always stick because the relevant associate dean is permitted to reduce sentences.

It’s an unsatisfactory system, disliked by many of the faculty, including me. Why? First because it prevents cases from ever being cleared up quickly. Because cheating is common the Honor Council is overworked, so cases are often pending for weeks or even months at a time. When the cheating takes place at the end of term, in final papers or final exams, the council members and cheaters all have gone, or are in the midst of going, home for vacation so a hearing cannot be scheduled until the next semester. That’s bad enough, but even worse is midsemester cheating. In those cases the student and professor continue to meet in every class session while the case awaits a hearing, each of them feeling aggrieved by the other. Students sometimes spread the word that they’ve been accused, and allege that the professor is prejudiced against them. It poisons the mood of trust and purposefulness that normally makes teaching and learning such a mutual pleasure.

The second weakness of this system is that the accused sometimes turns the hearing into an inquisition against the accusing professor. If the professor doesn’t have tenure it becomes a real ordeal—she feels she’s the one on trial, even though she merely did what she was supposed to do. And since she is only in the room to give her evidence she is unable to refute allegations made against her, behind her back, by the accused.

The third weakness is that the system, run by students, often lets the guilty get away with it by mistake. The student members of the Honor Council whom I have known have been a conscientious bunch, doing the best they can. But I’ve had several of them in class, and know that they cannot always spot obvious cases of plagiarism because they lack the necessary skill and experience as writers. Similarly, the evidence brought to them by science and mathematics professors is sometimes too technical for them to grasp.

The result is cynicism on all sides. Most professors I know simply deal with cheating cases on their own, reluctant to undergo the ordeal that follows from reporting a case. In doing so they’re technically violating the honor code themselves, but after getting burned a couple of times when they tried to do the right thing they’ve drawn the appropriate conclusion. Their own sanctions vary widely, with the result that no two cases of cheating get treated in quite the same way. It’s a far cry from places like the military academies, the University of Virginia, or Washington and Lee University, where honor is a central preoccupation, and where the only sanction for violating the honor code is expulsion, and where appeals take the form of a solemn public hearing that all members of the community can attend.

In history courses plagiarism is the commonest form of cheating. It takes various forms, and has changed with recent technological advances, but the reasons for it have stayed more or less the same. Some students plagiarize because they are lazy. It’s easy to get a book on the subject of your paper, then just copy out a few paragraphs and save the otherwise strenuous labor of researching, planning, and writing the paper as assigned. The really lazy ones can’t even be bothered to find a book different from those assigned by the professor, and they are correspondingly easy to catch. The tough ones are savvy enough to explore the library and find a book that’s a little off the beaten track. Some subjects are small enough that a decent professor is always going to know the likely places to look. Other subjects, such as the American Civil War and the French Revolution are so massive, and the literature on them so extensive, that it’s going to be harder to find the source. One of the worst feelings I get as a teacher comes from reading a paper by a student whose work has shown him throughout the semester to be idle and weak, realizing that it is plagiarized but being unable to recognize the source. The telltale sign is that the writing is much too accomplished, the analysis too cogent, and the vocabulary too rich. Students who previously couldn’t get agreement of verb tenses in a sentence and didn’t know how to use apostrophes are not suddenly going to write resonant prose full of artful sustained metaphors and skillful analogies.

It can take hours and hours of library research to find the source of
the cheating—often you never do discover it because the plagiarist has
shrewdly held onto the library's only copy of the book throughout the
ggrading period. Without the actual source, the Honor Council will not
convict, even when the internal evidence is overwhelming. Once, when
I was faculty advisor to the Honor Council, we were reviewing such a
case. I said to the accused student, "Define the word hegemony for me." She
could not do so. "What made you use this word, whose meaning
you did not know, in your paper?" "Er... it just sounded right in the
context," she said. "I see. What does proletarianization mean?" "It means
having a lot of children." "Oh! Why did you use that word since your
paper has nothing to do with children?" The verdict from the Honor
Council was... not guilty.

Another form of lazy plagiarism comes from students who belong to
fraternities and sororities, which keep files of papers from all their mem-
bers' courses. Stories circulate among professors about papers that have
appeared in their courses year after year, unchanged. The way to fore-
stall this kind of plagiarism is not to assign the same question twice. The
trick is to make it almost more trouble for the students to cheat than to
actually do what they are supposed to do. You're still not exempt from the
frat paper. I've heard lots of times about students just looking for the
closest key word in the frat file and handing in the same old stuff, often
bearing only the faintest and most distant resemblance to the question
asked.

A third form of lazy plagiarism is the straight copy, which pairs of
friends quite often attempt. In a big class, say forty students or more,
this is a method that sometimes works. If the professor reads the first of
two identical papers seventh out of forty, and the second thirty-fifth out
of forty, he's unlikely to make the match. This is particularly true if one
of the two students actually wrote the paper. If it is plagiarized from a
published source its high quality is going to make it suspicious, but if it's
written in the usual student way, only a professor with almost super-
human powers of alertness is going to make the match. One of the diffi-
culties in grading a batch of papers (all in answer to the same question)
is that the stumbling, ungrammatical mess of one blurs into the fum-
bbling unenlightened mess of the next. Much head shaking and coffee
drinking is needed to keep clear where one stopped and the next started,
indifference and distraction. He could spend an entire hour picking at
the frayed edge of his sweater, without glancing up or showing any sign
of awareness that educational activities were going on around him. Half-
way through the term he disappeared for two weeks. When he showed
up again after six consecutive absences, I asked him to stay behind for a
moment after class. "Where have you been?" "Something really horrible
happened, and I had to go home and spend a while with my mother.
"Oh, dear, what was that?" "I woke up one morning and found there
was a worm on my leg." Further questions elicited reassuring informa-
tion: the worm was not poisonous and had not harmed him in any way
except by actually being there. But, he said, it had "grossed him out" so
much that he lost his ability to work and could hardly bring himself to
go back into his apartment. Mom, in Tuscaloosa, was the alternative.

I chivvied him along and tried to help him catch up with the work
he had missed. That term, to avoid the monotony of reading thirty ver-
sions of the same paper, I had invited the students to choose any issue
in American environmental history on which to research and write their
final papers, subject only to checking in with me that their topic was
suitable. The potheads in the group had chosen the history of hemp, as
usual, and the rest had singled out a wide variety of different topics, but
this chap said he just couldn't think of anything. "Would you," said I,
"like me to suggest a topic?" "Yes," said he. So I asked him to write about
the history of wind-generated electric power and its early technical de-
velopment. I gave him the titles of a few books and articles he could
read on the subject too. When the paper came in, however, it carried
all the telltale signs. Marvelously well-written paragraphs, packed with
accurate technical information, filled page after page, and all of it
sounded familiar. I went to the library and got one of the books I had
assigned. There were all those paragraphs, exactly as written in the
paper.

"Can I bear to turn it over to the Honor Council?" I wondered. No, I
couldn't bear it. Instead I called him in again and said, "Look, you've
copied out nearly all this paper from the book." He looked straight into
my eyes, not in a challenging way but just in a matter-of-fact, business-
as-usual way, and said, "Yes, I did." "But that's plagiarism. It's forbidden
by the university honor code. I can't accept this work and I ought to
hand you over to the Honor Council. Why did you do it?" "Well, this
guy knows far more about the subject than me!" (also said without any
sense of incongruity or shame). I said he would have to do the assign-
ment properly, read a variety of sources, think over their implications,
and create a historical narrative based on what he had learned. He was
indignant. "What?! Do the paper again?! I'm a graduating senior." "You
haven't done it once yet." "Oh, don't be ridiculous. None of my other
professors have ever done this to me." I thought that was a remarkable
admission—indicating that he hadn't treated only my assignment this
way but did it routinely. With much ill grace and complaining he went
off, did the assignment, and handed in a thoroughly inferior piece of
work, whose badness assured me that it really was his. He got the lowest
passing grade and gave me a killing look when I happened to catch sight
of him on graduation day.

All these were, in a sense, cases of plagiarism induced by laziness.
Another form is greed-plagiarism, in which students are so hungry for
A's on their transcripts that they leave nothing to chance and present the
work of others, cleverer than themselves, as though they had written it.
They can be tough to catch because they're often intelligent and moti-
vated, albeit in a dishonest way. Occasionally they even intersperse their
own sentences with those they have copied out, to throw the blood-
hounds off their scent.

Finally come the hopeless cases, students who are in over their heads
and don't really know how to write a paper but are too embarrassed to
ask for the help they obviously need. I had the job of supervising one in
1995, while she did an internship with a brokerage company. I told her
that to get credit for the internship she would have to write a historical
research paper related to the work she had been doing. Her company
traded with Mexico, so, after much uncertainty and to-ing and fro-ing,
she decided to write on the negotiation of the North American Free
Trade Agreement (NAFTA) back in the early 1990s. The paper came in
with every sign of plagiarism. Much of it was written in the prose of
international law, and it was clearly the work of a deeply informed ex-
pert. My favorite passage of the paper (remember, this was 1995) said,
"This interim phase of the negotiations has settled the quota issue, but
the enumerated items remain to be negotiated when deliberations re-
sume in June 1993." I handed it over to the Honor Council but got a
call from the professor it assigned to be faculty advisor. Normally he's a
niger in such matters, but this time the student's sheer bewilderment had turned him into a lamb. "We can't sanction this kid for plagiarism because she simply doesn't know what it is. When I asked her about it, she couldn't grasp the concept, and when I showed her that sentence about 1993 she couldn't see why it was incriminating." "Well if she's that incompetent can we at least give her a straight F instead of an Honor Council?" That's what we did, but I still had to endure a long and painful session in office hours while she berated me for ignoring all her hard work and for being prejudiced against her.

The fastest-growing form of plagiarism is Internet-related. One semester I assigned a paper that required the students to consider the seven movies they had watched during the term, and to compare the version of events depicted there with the events that had actually taken place (about which they had done intensive reading). It was a tough paper assignment, since it required them to keep two chronologies in mind: the historical chronology itself, and the twentieth-century chronology of the films. Some of the students were annoyed to discover that the film directors had not obliged them by making the earliest film depict the earliest historic events. That was only one of the many conceptual tangles the assignment created.

The paper written by a student I'll just call Z consisted of a summary of the seven films' plots. I gave it a C+ and wrote something like this: "You have been studying this subject for fifteen weeks, but no one would know it from this paper, in which you have hardly done more than summarize the plots of the seven films, throwing in occasional references to the history that lay behind them. Also, you have clearly used outside sources to get those plot summaries. You must footnotem them" (the paper had no documentation). About two papers later another student made a mistake in his description of the events in The Great Dictator. To check on the sequence (I knew he was wrong but couldn't quite remember the order of events), I went on the Web and just typed in "Charlie Chaplin, Great Dictator." Up came a long list of relevant sites and I clicked on the first of them. After reading for a minute I realized that what this paper had seemed to have said was a million miles away. I checked back to student Z's paper, and there, sure enough, unchanged, were the same words I noted the site's name and checked to see whether it offered plot summaries of the other films we had seen. It did, and I found that Z had followed the same procedure with all of them. I got on the phone to the Honor Council at once.

Plagiarism always has an effect on me—an invariably bad effect. First, it shows that the student wasn't willing to do the work he or she was supposed to do, and looked for an easy way out. That in turn suggests a lack of interest in the course. It would be nice to think that, after paying the incredible sums they or their parents shell out for tuition, they would take it seriously. Most do, but some don't. The easy way out, plagiarism, also suggests that the student doesn't expect to get caught. In other words, they think the professors aren't clever enough to catch them. That's why, when you do catch one, it's hard not to feel at least a little gleeful pleasure. You know "Gotcha!" But along with that feeling comes a queasy, unhappy feeling. "The kid thought I was stupid and that everything I'd taught him didn't really matter. It was just for a grade, and he was willing to get the grade any old how."

Discussions of Honor Council reform that suggest the professor ought to have more say in what happens to the cheater often run up against the stumbling block of professors' righteous anger. I admit it, the righteous anger is real. I've had moments of fury about it, especially when the cheater is a student to whom I have given a lot of time and attention. There aren't many feelings worse than feeling betrayed, and plagiarists can bring it on in a sharp and acid form. Actually, I suppose the last thing on the plagiarists' minds is the professor's reaction—I doubt it even occurs to one in fifty. They are usually desperate to get something finished and handed in on time, and just hope the professor won't notice. In everyday life, moreover, they are surrounded by examples of cheating—in filing taxes, in using fake IDs to get alcohol, in sexual relationships, and in sports. College cheating probably seems like fair game, too—they probably think of it as a victimless crime.

Another way in which plagiarism is sickening to a teacher (or at least to this teacher) is that it jaundices the way you look at students' work in general. When, in a pile of mediocre work, you finally encounter a well-written paper, almost the first thing you think is, "It could be plagiarized." If it's very good, the thought that you've got an excellent student in your class jostles against the thought that you've got another cheat. In other words, you're going to react strongly one way or another, and when what you hoped turns out to be what you feared (yet again), the disappointment is all the more nauseating.