

Missing in action? A philosophy of plagiarism and implications for learners and teachers

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Main Points

- most plagiarism definitions frame it as *rules* or *behaviours* addressed by *processes* (inform students, use turnitin, punish offenders)
- philosophically plagiarism is characterised by *absence* (of writer/student and teacher)
- solutions to plagiarism require teachers to actively *engage* in teaching/modelling writing skills

Outline

1. Definitions of plagiarism
2. Ethics of plagiarism – Why do people do it?
3. Dealing with plagiarism
4. An engagement philosophy of plagiarism

Discussion – what are the implications of this engagement philosophy of plagiarism for teachers and learners?

Basis of this presentation...

- my own views about plagiarism formed over past 20 years of tertiary teaching
- + views in published sources

1. Definitions of plagiarism

In simple terms plagiarism is *intellectual theft*

Oxford Dictionary definition:

The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own

- **Origin:** early 17th century: from Latin *plagiarius* 'kidnapper' (from *plagium* 'a kidnapping', from Greek *plagion*)

Similar definitions can be found in many works on the topic...





Murdoch University definition... (i)

Plagiarism and collusion are defined as including any of the following five types of **behaviour** and apply to work in any medium (e.g. written or audio text, film production, computer programs, etc):

1. Inappropriate/inadequate acknowledgement
2. Collusion
3. Verbatim copying (without acknowledgement)
4. Ghost writing
5. Purloining (using material from other student)



Policies
Assessment Policy 2011 January 01 s9.3



Murdoch University definition... (ii)

Plagiarism constitutes using the work of another without indicating by referencing (and by quotation marks when exact phrases or passages are borrowed) that the ideas expressed are not one's own.

Students can use the ideas and information from other authors, but this use must be acknowledged.

It is also not acceptable to submit an assignment that is simply a paraphrasing of extracts from other authors: **the work submitted must include some intellectual contribution of the student's own.**



<http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Educational-technologies/Academic-integrity/>
Murdoch University Handbook 2012, p23



TEACHING AND LEARNING

UWA definition of plagiarism

- Plagiarism is usually defined as the unattributed use of someone else's words, creations, ideas and arguments as one's own. Within university policies it is usually further extended to include the use of 'too close' or extensive paraphrase.
<http://www.teachingandlearning.uwa.edu.au/staff/policies/conduct/plagiarism>
- Minimising academic misconduct (including [plagiarism](#) and other forms of cheating) is an important part of the University's commitment to extend positive educational approaches among students. **We believe that success in promoting ethical scholarship and developing skills in academic literacy** will help reduce any instances of academic misconduct.
<http://www.teachingandlearning.uwa.edu.au/staff/policies/conduct>



ECU definition of plagiarism

- Plagiarism refers to the knowing or unknowing representation of one's own work as the ideas or writings of another without appropriate acknowledgement or reference. ...
- Partner teaching staff and students are encouraged to use the Plagiarism Academic Tip Sheet and the ECU Referencing Guide.



<http://www.ecu.edu.au/international/representatives-and-partners/partner-portal/partner-procedure-manual/section-3-academic-administration/plagiarism-and-cheating>



Curtin definition of plagiarism

- Plagiarism Means presenting the work or property of another person as if it were one's own without appropriate acknowledgement or referencing
<http://academicintegrity.curtin.edu.au/policy/>

Plagiarism Policy and Procedures

5. POLICY STATEMENT

The University places the highest importance on the principles underpinning Academic Integrity and requires that its Staff and Students behave in accordance with these principles at all times. Academic scholarship necessarily requires building on the work of others, however, the use of others' work must be acknowledged appropriately. Plagiarism devalues the quality of learning both for the individual and for others enrolled in a course. It can compromise the integrity of University awards and, in extreme cases, damage the University's national and international reputation.

This policy, in conjunction with Statute No. 10 - Student Discipline and the Academic Misconduct Rules, sets out the procedures to be followed when managing allegations of plagiarism against Students.



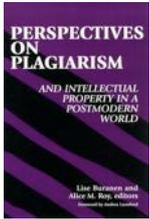
Notre Dame definition of plagiarism

- Plagiarism is the act of presenting other people's words, ideas and creations as your own work. You are not presenting others words ideas and creations as your own if you acknowledge that they belong to others. Plagiarism can happen intentionally or unintentionally and is probably the most common form of academic misconduct.
http://www.nd.edu.au/libraries/pilot/module6/6_5/index.shtml
- Your primary responsibility in submitting assignments **is to present your own, original work for assessment**. At the same time you are encouraged to use journal articles, books and other references to develop your ideas, and to substantiate your arguments and opinions.
http://www.nd.edu.au/libraries/pilot/module6/6_5/6_5_1.shtml

4 metaphors for plagiarism (Leight 1999)

derived from analysis of 70 definitions :

- plagiarism as stealing
- plagiarism as ethical violation
- plagiarism as borrowing
- **plagiarism as intellectual laziness**



Leight D (1999) Plagiarism as Metaphor, In: L Buranen and A Roy (eds) *Perspectives on Plagiarism and Intellectual Property in a Postmodern World*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, pp221-229 – http://openlibrary.org/books/OL31209M/Perspectives_on_plagiarism_and_intellectual_property_in_a_postmodern_world

Academic Integrity – Murdoch University (i)

Academic integrity is an adherence to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in all work.

...

The University regards most seriously any acts of dishonesty relating to assessment of University courses and research.

This includes plagiarism, unauthorised collaboration, examination misconduct, theft of other students' work and misconduct in research.

Acting unfairly or dishonestly in assessment is defined as misconduct under University statute.



<http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Educational-technologies/Academic-integrity/>

Academic Integrity – Murdoch University (ii)

Depending on the seriousness of the case, dishonesty in assessment can lead to a requirement to **undertake additional work**, failure in a unit or in a part of it, suspension from the University or even permanent expulsion from the University.

The University regards any form of cheating as a serious matter of academic dishonesty that threatens the integrity of the assessment processes and awards of the University, to the detriment of all other students and graduates of the University.



<http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Educational-technologies/Academic-integrity/>

2. Ethics of plagiarism – Why do people do it?

Granitz and Loewy (2007) study:

Given the tremendous proliferation of student plagiarism involving the Internet, the purpose of this study is to determine which theory of ethical reasoning students invoke when defending their transgressions...

This study examined how students justify plagiarism once they are caught.

Granitz N & D Loewy (2007) Applying Ethical Theories: Interpreting and Responding to Student Plagiarism, *Journal of Business Ethics* 72:293–306

Ethical philosophies and plagiarism (i)

Deontology (morals, fundamental rights)

- 'I didn't know what plagiarism was/'I didn't know that plagiarism was wrong'

Utilitarianism

- 'Plagiarism leads to better learning or higher grades/'Nobody gets hurt'

Rational self-interest (social contract theory)

- 'I'm publicizing the author's work/'The teacher doesn't put much effort into this, so why should I?'

Granitz N & D Loewy (2007) Applying Ethical Theories: Interpreting and Responding to Student Plagiarism, *Journal of Business Ethics* 72:293–306

Ethical philosophies and plagiarism (ii)

Machiavellianism (ethical egoism)

- 'Look how clever I am... I can plagiarize, do well, and not get caught'
- 'It's the teacher's fault' [if caught]

Cultural relativism

- 'It's allowable in the country where I come from'

Situational or contingent ethics

- 'My kid was sick/'I ran out of time to study...'

Granitz N & D Loewy (2007) Applying Ethical Theories: Interpreting and Responding to Student Plagiarism, *Journal of Business Ethics* 72:293–306

Application of the Granitz and Loewy (2007) study

Understanding which theory of ethical reasoning students employ is critical, as preemptive steps can be taken by faculty to counteract this reasoning and prevent plagiarism.

[more on some of their strategies later...]

Granitz N & D Loewy (2007) Applying Ethical Theories: Interpreting and Responding to Student Plagiarism, *Journal of Business Ethics* 72:293–306

Why plagiarism happens – Murdoch Uni (i)

There are many reasons why you might consider plagiarising something. Factors that may lead you to consider plagiarising in your work could include:

- *Poor time management - over committed with work or social activities*
- *English Comprehension difficulties - low English language test (IELTS or TOEFL) score*
- *Cultural differences - referencing sources was not required in previous educational institutions*
- *A belief in not getting caught.*



<http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Student-life/Study-successfully/Referencing-and-citing/How-to-avoid-plagiarism/>

Why plagiarism happens – Murdoch Uni (ii)

Generally, most plagiarism is unintended. A significant portion of plagiarism results from poor study habits or from a combination of:

- *Carelessness*
- *Submitting first drafts*
- *Mistakes with citations*
- *Information that has been copied but not cited and referenced*
- *Inappropriate and poor paraphrasing*
- *Reference list incorrectly formatted or not attached*
- *Inadequate English language skills and understanding*



<http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Student-life/Study-successfully/Referencing-and-citing/How-to-avoid-plagiarism/>

3. Dealing with plagiarism

Academic Integrity – Murdoch University

The **Foundation units in particular assist students in identifying plagiarism**, which may be an acceptable practice elsewhere, but is not acceptable within universities.



<http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Educational-technologies/Academic-integrity/>
Murdoch University *Handbook* 2012, p23

Murdoch University submission and receipt of assignments – policy

Plagiarism Detection:

Students are expected to produce assignments consistent with Murdoch University's academic integrity values.

Prior to assignment submission, opportunities should be made available for students to submit an electronic copy of their assignment to the University's plagiarism detection software in order to identify any potential plagiarism.



Assessment Policy 2011 January 01 s13.5

Policies

Turnitin software – Murdoch University (i)

It is increasingly important to ensure that students are aware of plagiarism and how to avoid it.

To assist with this, Murdoch University provides Turnitin plagiarism-checking software.

- Turnitin is a pattern matching system that checks text submitted in assignments, against text in its database, the web and electronic journals.
- Students and staff are able to submit documents electronically and Turnitin will provide a report which shows matched text in colour and a percentage rating.
- Receiving the report provides students and staff with the **opportunity to check whether that material has been referenced properly.**



<http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Educational-Development/Educational-technologies/Turnitin/>

Turnitin software – Murdoch University (ii)

The University has **adopted a developmental rather than a punitive approach** with the use of Turnitin.

That is, Turnitin is available for students to **check their own** assignments before submission for marking and **it is expected that this will improve their understanding of collusion, plagiarism and referencing.**



<http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Educational-Development/Educational-technologies/Turnitin/>
<http://www.aldis.com.au/AboutPlagPrev.htm>

How to avoid plagiarism – Murdoch Uni

It is important to understand that **none** of these [i.e. listed in previous slides] is an acceptable justification for an act of plagiarism.

If you are experiencing difficulty with your studies, **then you should seek assistance** from your tutors, lecturers, and / or the dedicated and helpful staff at the Student Learning Centre.



<http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Student-life/Study-successfully/Referencing-and-citing/How-to-avoid-plagiarism/>

4. An engagement philosophy of plagiarism

Plagiarism is typically defined as a behaviour

- e.g. in terms of crime & punishment/rules to be followed
- Ethical analysis serves to explain reasons for such behaviours

Formal (Murdoch Uni) strategies to address plagiarism are: Foundation Units, student self help and Turnitin software

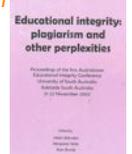
But what is plagiarism philosophically?

- e.g. operating at level of ideas, beliefs, values, principles of reality...

Clerehan and Johnson (2003) suggest need for philosophical approach...

Current discussions of plagiarism in the Australian university have taken a criminological turn. At the same time, there has been a growing tendency to focus on technological solutions to the problem such as Turnitin.com.

Against these trends, we argue that plagiarism remains, fundamentally, a philosophical and pedagogical issue for universities (p88)



Clerehan R and A Johnson (2003) Ending the War on Plagiarism: Appropriation in Context, In: H Marsden, M Hicks and A Bundy (eds) *Educational Integrity: Plagiarism and Other Perplexities*, Proceedings of the first Australian Educational Integrity Conference University of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia 21-22 November 2003, pp88-96

An engagement philosophy of plagiarism – **students**

To me, plagiarism is the **absence of self**, the non-engagement or non-investment of the writer

- e.g. copying and pasting is passive



Writing is a creative and individual process

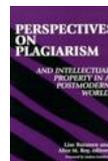
A writer should embed themselves in their written work

- e.g. 100 students in a class writing the same essay should return 100 unique pieces of work

image: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0087727/>

Leight (1999) hints at absence of students ...

the real problem of plagiarism is that it takes the place of intellectualizing, which should not only be the work of the student but anyone involved in academic pursuits (p228)



Leight D (1999) Plagiarism as Metaphor, In: L Buranen and A Roy (eds) *Perspectives on Plagiarism and Intellectual Property in a Postmodern World*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, pp221-229

An engagement philosophy of plagiarism – **teachers**

Use of software such as Turnitin arguably substitutes a machine for teacher engagement(?)

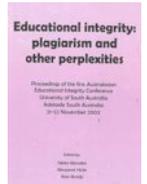


Reliance on Foundation Units or Student Learning Centre to address plagiarism abrogates teacher responsibility(?)

image: http://www.impawards.com/1985/missing_in_action_2.html

Taylor (2003) suggests absence of teachers...

The plagiarism debate is typically characterised as a problem of either teach-them-to-be-good or catch-them-at-it. By itself, neither approach has a realistic chance of success because teaching and learning processes are ignored.



By locating blame with the students, educators unconsciously absolve themselves of responsibility to examine their pedagogy. (p180)

Taylor G (2003) The Critical Role of Pedagogy in Plagiarism Prevention: the Unley Ten Point Counter Plagiarism Strategy. In: H Marsden, M Hicks and A Bundy (eds) *Educational Integrity: Plagiarism and Other Perplexities*, Proceedings of the first Australian Educational Integrity Conference University of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia 21-22 November 2003, pp180-186

Melles (2003) hints at absence of teachers...

...textbook definitions, university policies and guidelines present plagiarism as 'transparently' wrong or an a morally neutral case of incorrect acknowledgement of sources. Discourse of 'crime and punishment' is neither intraculturally honest in presuming consensus within Australian society, nor interculturally justified. (p60)

...plagiarism practices are positioned on the periphery pedagogy (p64)



Melles G (2003) Challenging Discourses of Plagiarism and the Reproductive ESL Learner. In: H Marsden, M Hicks and A Bundy (eds) *Educational Integrity: Plagiarism and Other Perplexities*, Proceedings of the first Australian Educational Integrity Conference University of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia 21-22 November 2003, pp60-66

Solutions to plagiarism (i)

Based on this philosophical perspective, there must be active engagement by teachers and students alike!

- e.g. all academics (as appropriate) to teach writing skills
 - instruct and inspire
 - motivate and empower
 - role-model good behaviour
- set writing tasks that demand writer engagement (i.e. are difficult to plagiarise)



image: <http://www.imdb.com/media/m3394999296/tt0430922>

Solutions to plagiarism – Clerehan and Johnson (2003)

Student writing... must be understood in the context of a wider cultural shift whereby 'the author' is seen as the 'originator', rather than merely the 'reporter' of ideas'.

... we propose that this problem can be addressed by focusing on teaching students appropriate and discipline specific techniques of 'appropriation' and acknowledgment'. . (p88)



Clerehan R and A Johnson (2003) Ending the War on Plagiarism: Appropriation in Context. In: H Marsden, M Hicks and A Bundy (eds) *Educational Integrity: Plagiarism and Other Perplexities*, Proceedings of the first Australian Educational Integrity Conference University of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia 21-22 November 2003, pp88-96

Solutions to plagiarism (ii)

Zero tolerance for plagiarised work (and poorly referenced writing more generally)

- non-engagement = grade of zero
- follow university procedures for reporting plagiarism

(but consider giving opportunity for resubmission – so that student engagement can occur)

- e.g. mean score for resubmitted work if first offence

Plagiarism Policy and Procedures



5.3.3 Educational guidance or remediation will be provided to all Students found to have plagiarised at Level I and they will be provided with the opportunity to address the plagiarism issues in their work without penalty.

Resubmission as solution...

- Blum (2009, pp174-176) provides a detailed example of how she permitted a student guilty of plagiarism to resubmit the work (a take-home final examination) with discussions taking place with student in between submissions (including agreeing on the punishments that would apply - i.e. maximum grade obtainable)



Blum S (2009) *My Word! Plagiarism and College Culture*, Cornell University Press, London
<http://research.library.gsu.edu/content.php?pid=195563&sid=1893632>

Solutions to plagiarism – Granitz & Loewy (2007)

- **Teach proper citation and documentation techniques**
- **Act as a role model**
 - e.g. reference all lecture notes, unit materials etc
- **Avoid standardized general assignments**
- **Adopt zero tolerance approach**
- **Institute clear, severe penalties**
- **Enforce penalties**

+ others (including codes of conduct and software)

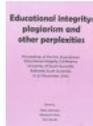
[Note: these authors advocate different strategies for each of 6 ethical reasons given for student plagiarism]

Granitz N & D Loewy (2007) Applying Ethical Theories: Interpreting and Responding to Student Plagiarism, *Journal of Business Ethics* 72:293–306

Solutions to plagiarism – Taylor (2003)

By designing tasks more thoughtfully, being explicit about processes, paying attention to the functions of language and rewarding the process as well as the product it is possible to significantly increase the difficulty of plagiarism and therefore reduce its incidence.

Educators also need to contribute to the development of students' ethical intelligence and be aware of methods used by plagiarists as well as simple strategies to detect theft of intellectual property. (p180)



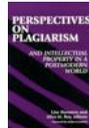
Taylor G (2003) The Critical Role of Pedagogy in Plagiarism Prevention: the Unley Ten Point Counter Plagiarism Strategy, In: H Marsden, M Hicks and A Bundy (eds) *Educational Integrity: Plagiarism and Other Perplexities*, Proceedings of the first Australian Educational Integrity Conference University of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia 21-22 November 2003, pp180-186

Solutions to plagiarism – Leight (1999)...

...the diverse metaphors of plagiarism show that defining it as any one thing may cause problems for students and their teachers alike.

Local communities need to come to a consensus and talk about how they decide to define it.

And most important, teachers need to talk to students about how definitions can be socially constructed yet still carry the weight of "law" (p229)



Leight D (1999) Plagiarism as Metaphor, In: L Buranen and A Roy (eds) *Perspectives on Plagiarism and Intellectual Property in a Postmodern World*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, pp221-229

Solutions to plagiarism – Clerehan and Johnson (2003)

Narrow, generic definitions of plagiarism, furthermore, can lead to misunderstanding of the problem, particularly for students, and to ineffective solutions. More specifically, such inelastic language has tended to suggest solutions to plagiarism that hinder rather than enhance teaching and learning.

... What we are trying to suggest here is that it is teachers who have to take responsibility, to some extent, for student learning, especially when it comes to the work of writing. We cannot afford to let technology, or the law, bear this responsibility in our place. (p95)

Clerehan R and A Johnson (2003) Ending the War on Plagiarism: Appropriation in Context, In: H Marsden, M Hicks and A Bundy (eds) *Educational Integrity: Plagiarism and Other Perplexities*, Proceedings of the first Australian Educational Integrity Conference University of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia 21-22 November 2003, pp88-96



Solutions to plagiarism – Taylor (2003)

There is no simple antidote to plagiarism and never will be.

No miraculous technology, no overnight conversion of the student body to scrupulous honesty, no glamorous solution but the long haul that pivots on effective pedagogy and encompasses a range of strategies. (p186)

Taylor G (2003) The Critical Role of Pedagogy in Plagiarism Prevention: the Unley Ten Point Counter Plagiarism Strategy, In: H Marsden, M Hicks and A Bundy (eds) *Educational Integrity: Plagiarism and Other Perplexities*, Proceedings of the first Australian Educational Integrity Conference University of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia 21-22 November 2003, pp180-186



Conclusions/Main Points

- current plagiarism definitions frame it as *rules* or *behaviours* addressed by *processes* (inform students, use turnitin, punish offenders)
- philosophically plagiarism is characterised by *absence* (writer/student and teacher)
- solutions to plagiarism require teachers to actively *engage* in teaching/modelling writing skills

Thank you!

Discussion – *what are the implications of this engagement philosophy of plagiarism for teachers and learners?*

