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Rhetoric of plagiarism: Problems, opportunities, and interactions

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Rhetoric of Plagiarism: Problems, Opportunities, and Interactions

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Abstract

This thesis explores the question of how James Madison University (JMU) communicates information concerning plagiarism policy and values to students, especially first-year composition students. The research covers some history of plagiarism issues, questions of why plagiarism is so difficult for scholars to define, why students plagiarize, and how attitudes in academia are changing as definitions continue to evolve. Overall, JMU communicates plagiarism poorly to students in their early stages of integrating into life at JMU, though the university still takes pains to inform students of the consequences of plagiarism through first-year composition instructors. The implications of this writing are an attempt to offer another view of JMU's plagiarism policies and to hopefully inspire action to better communicate these policies to students.

Rhetoric of Plagiarism: Problems, Opportunities, and Interactions

Introduction

As a graduate student and a first-year instructor at James Madison University (JMU), I would have told anyone who asked me that I had a strong understanding of plagiarism. As a student, I understood the concepts involved in proper citation, quotation, summarization and the other methods of properly interacting with sources. As a teacher, I would give myself credit to believe that I was prepared to deal with any obvious outbreaks of plagiarism among my students, but also, that I didn't really suspect – or expect – to encounter much plagiarism in the classrooms of a university such as JMU.

In February of 2010 though, I encountered a specific news item which made me begin to question whether or not I was as aware of the issues of plagiarism as I believed myself to be. The New York Times story, titled, "Author, 17, Say's It's Mixing, not Plagiarism" describes the novel *Axolotl Roadkill* by German author, Helene Hegemann and the way in which she lifted whole sections from another text – also a German novel – titled "Strobo" as well as other sources. Ms. Hegemanns' response, a statement issued by her publisher, was to say, unapologetically, "There's no such thing as originality anyway, just authenticity" (qtd. in New York Times, 2/12/2010).

Ms. Hegemann's defense of her actions led me to further investigate the issue and to look deeper into the response. One of my professors at the time said the girl needed to grow up, and would learn how quickly such excuses failed in the real world. But despite the accusations of plagiarism, and the resultant media outcry, *Axolotl Roadkill* remained a finalist for a prestigious German literary award, the fiction category of the Leipzig Book

Fair (NYT). So what did this mean for plagiarism, for the practice and enforcement at universities and colleges (or even high schools)? After all, the girl involved in this scandal was only 17. In the United States she might still be a junior in High School. If she won the prize – validating work that may be considered by many as, only partly hers, then what precedent did that set for such discussions in the future? Ms. Hegemann's case is not a case of academic plagiarism, in fact being a commercial issue -- but it seems to remain relevant to future discussions, especially in light of the attitude of a 17 year old author, perhaps as a harbinger of a changing view, not only for writers, but students and professors as well. Leaving the commercial cases behind, but with such influences nagging at my thoughts and providing my initial impetus for research, I began to realize that academic plagiarism is a complicated question being contested and theorized and that I did not understand plagiarism as well as I believed. The issues were far from clear.

As I began to investigate the issues involved for myself – and last semester while engaged in a course in Legal Writing – I began to develop my approach to the subject, consisting of looking at the way the university communicates ideas about plagiarism to students. My focus returned to the university culture, it seemed important to me, somehow, to connect with what the university was telling my students about plagiarism in the face of what they might read in the media about it. Academic plagiarism issues might not make the national press, but they are of vital importance to the academic culture, and a deeper understanding seemed important. My panic may have been the reaction of a first year writing instructor, not yet fully indoctrinated into the field, but it was an area of study that fascinated me – and one to which I'd never before given serious thought.

What did I really know about plagiarism? How much of what I knew was lore

gathered from other students, or the off-hand comments of professors instead of from the

actual documentation of the university and the appointed university authorities, such as

the JMU Honor Council? When I sat down to write a syllabus for my GWRTC 103 class,

did I understand the implications of the following phrasing, required by the university:

> *"Honor Code*
>
> As a student at JMU, you should adhere to the JMU Honor Code
>
> (http://www.jmu.edu/honor/code.shtml) concerning academic dishonesty.
>
> Students are expected to abide by its precepts at all times. I distinguish
>
> between *intentional* and *unintentional* plagiarism. **If a student**
>
> ***intentionally* plagiarize in a paper or is found being dishonest on an**
>
> **assignment for this class he or she may receive an F for the course.**
>
> Forms of academic dishonesty include the following: […]
>
> **Plagiarism**—the presentation of another person's work as your own,
>
> whether you mean to or not.
>
> This prohibition against plagiarism should in no way inhibit or
>
> discourage you from seeking legitimate assistance in developing an
>
> assignment. You need not write in isolation. As you will read
>
> below, this course will provide you with lots of opportunities to
>
> receive assistance with your writing from your peers and from me.
>
> Furthermore, there are various tutorial resources available at the
>
> university, including the FYI Resource & Writing Center in
>
> Huffman Hall, Room A100, where six writing tutors are available

to provide a peer review service for first-year students with any of their writing concerns.

When you seek these kinds of legitimate academic assistance, you are not plagiarizing. In fact, you are making an extraordinary attempt to improve your writing and academic performance. In such cases, you should inform your instructor of the fact you have sought assistance from a given source on an assignment. This acknowledgment should be stated in the essay's end material (e.g. Works Cited page, Notes). And as a reminder of the Honor Code, each final draft submitted in this class should include the following statement signed by you, "This work, for which I received no unauthorized assistance, complies with the JMU Honor Code. Signed: _____)."

The language of this quote, gathered from the Syllabus template provided to students participating in the Common Syllabus Project being run by Dr. Billie Jones at JMU, begins to discuss plagiarism as being an offense which can be inadvertent ("whether you mean to or not") as well as intentional. It suggests that students have resources to avoid plagiarism (the Writing Center and others), and even instructs students about language to be used when informing a professor that help was given. And that language was my starting point, the first document I encountered as a professor – and often the only documentation I concerned myself with each semester as a student – concerning plagiarism: the syllabus. It is also worthwhile to note, briefly, that the language used here to describe plagiarism is

not the language of the Honor Code, which makes no mention of "if you mean to or not." Inconsistencies such as this one led me to the task of examining and analyzing student resources concerning plagiarism and the difficulties reconciling those resources.

Did I understand what students would find when they went searching for further resources though? Did I know what students would find when they went to the Writing Center Website and attempted to discover more about plagiarism issues themselves? What was JMU saying to students about plagiarism?

My conclusion was that I just didn't know. I didn't know enough to answer tough questions about plagiarism and if I couldn't answer them to my satisfaction, then I needed to find out. My concern sprang from my budding research, introducing me to the works of Richard Posner, Rebecca Moore Howard, Thomas Mallon, and others who were writing about plagiarism and wrestling with the proper ways to define the term, what activities should be considered plagiarism, the criminalizing of the plagiarist through language about stealing and kidnapping. I realized that my thoughts on plagiarism were potentially outdated, too centered on the idea of forcing students to be original, and in some ways echoed the difficulty of students as they learned how to join an academic conversation.

The typical college student at a university (such as James Madison) will probably tell you that they understand plagiarism. Much like the Supreme Court statement about indecency, there is a sense that – even if plagiarism is hard to strictly define – you know it when you see it. On one hand, the academic dishonesty associated with plagiarism, and

the potential consequences attached to being caught are given great importance, but at the same time, students are often left without clear guidance to help them navigate the dangers of plagiarism successfully – because they are taught to avoid and to fear the action – but not always adequately informed about the act of plagiarism itself.

For the student who says, "Yeah, plagiarism, I know what that is," where does that knowledge come from. Much of the students' perception may be made up of assumed lore – knowledge they acquire from other students, knowledge that is not always perfectly correct. And when a student does seek information to guide them to a better knowledge of plagiarism issues, what resources do they have available? What resources does the university provide for finding true information – and perhaps more importantly – what message is the university sending about the importance of plagiarism to the academic community? This need to know, to have answers concerning plagiarism also represented a perfect crossroads of my academic and professional goals and I found myself reconciling three lenses I wanted to look through as I approached this problem. The first is student – as a graduate student, and someone who completed their undergraduate degree in an adult degree program, I did not have the same college experience as a young first year student facing college directly out of high school. As an undergraduate student I missed the experience of most of the University's instruments for discussing plagiarism and as a graduate student away from school for many years I had to learn the proper discourse anew. The second influence was my first experience as a university instructor. Working the 2010-2011 school year at James Madison University (JMU) teaching GWRTC 103, a first year course covering areas of critical thinking, reading, writing, and research I was confronting my own need to have a better grasp of

how to guide students to be ethical and capable researchers, to discuss the value of their work and how to avoid the dangers of plagiarism (and thus needed a better understanding of the term myself). What resources did JMU provide students to direct their growth in this area? What resources could I draw upon to use in my own classroom? Finally, as a researcher myself, asking questions to build this thesis writing, I found myself exploring a territory with few answers and many questions and suggestions. And if students are struggling to understand these issues then it becomes a problem of information literacy as much as anything else. Students cannot be expected to become ethical, or even "good" researchers, if the tools and resources aren't in place to teach them, or if those resources are too outdated to be taken seriously. Connected to this, if the university wants students to become a part of the culture of JMU and embrace not only learning opportunities but shared values, then these need to be communicated without the haphazard presentation which currently seems to be in place.

With these ideas in mind, that is the focus of what I hope to accomplish here – to investigate the definitions and documents used to speak to university students and shape their understanding of plagiarism issues. Further, I intend to approach this subject by examining and analyzing policies, documents, ideas, tests, and other devices of acculturation to the academic community – in terms of attitudes and approaches to plagiarism detection and enforcement. This explanation will use my own university, James Madison University, as a case study of sorts, examining what resources a student may turn to in any attempt to understand plagiarism. Rebecca Moore Howard, whose work on plagiarism may be the most influencing, the most comprehensive, offers a view of plagiarism policy that, while uniting definitions is important, standards and policies

can be and should be, local, giving each university control over what values and opportunities it wants to emphasize in the plagiarism discussion.

While many scholars with a great deal more experience than I are talking and writing about plagiarism, this is what I have to offer to the conversation – a set of local standards and artifacts to examine, to situate JMU in the plagiarism debate and discover what the university is doing for its students in this arena. What is JMU doing right, and what are areas where the university could improve its communication?

Literature Review

Considering my starting position, as a graduate student researcher writing a thesis, a first time instructor teaching first year writing students, and beyond research, as a student myself, it became clear that I did not have the answers to my own questions about plagiarism. I needed resources to begin shaping my own answers, to begin framing my own questions more clearly, and to examine the territory others have already covered in the scholarly discussion of plagiarism.

I found that plagiarism is a topic broadly considered but perhaps, by comparison, sometimes shallowly pursued in academic discussion – with notable exceptions – and a growing importance in the literature. I found the debate about plagiarism in the university to be a contested topic, with scholars weighing in about what actions should properly be defined as plagiarism, changing emphasis on the need for better methods of detection, and a wide ranging set of definitions – and movement to change those definitions and perceptions of plagiarism which currently exist.

Initially, my search cast a wide net and I discovered writing in many fields, from the sciences, psychology, education, and composition to name a few. The process of narrowing that field helped to frame the greater goal of this writing – to examine several artifacts used by James Madison University to communicate about plagiarism to students. But the scope is still a little larger than this one statement might suggest – some of the work being done begins to impact the policies and decisions made by universities and is worth considering briefly, for that reason. So I have kept the approach broad in some places, narrower in others, and tried to balance the research against my needs, not only to

examine JMU's resources – but also to answer my own questions and better educate me as I guided students in my early teaching efforts.

Starting with Rebecca Moore Howard and her work, *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants*, a much looked to text in the plagiarism discussion, she contends that plagiarism is not a topic treated as an issue of theory in writing pedagogy (xix) but it is still a topic with broad representation – and discussed in similar language across many disciplines including Education, Composition, Psychology, Medicine, and the Sciences. Each of these disciplines is struggling with the problem in their own right, both professionally and in the classroom. Plagiarism is also an international issue, with different cultures interpreting the issue in different ways.

I will begin this review by examining some definitions of the term (and act) of plagiarism from different sources and scholars. The language of the definitions is important to the way policy can be shaped around the chosen definition. In tackling the question of definitions, I will focus on the scholarship of plagiarism, the attempts to break apart the issue and the evolving discussion of those pieces.

Beyond current and traditional definitions of plagiarism, I will introduce some of the new ideas being considered. The conversation surrounding plagiarism, which starts with how to define the word and the actions deserving of that label, is shifting. Scholars are working to change the academic perspective to be more inclusive of student considerations and writing strategies. Some of the work focuses on the manner in which students negotiate their new role as academic writers and the steps they need to take to become successful in that role – which sometimes includes writing behaviors currently labeled as plagiarism.

I will also explore writing on academic and student perceptions of plagiarism and examine some of the groundwork for students such as the Virginia SOLs and what knowledge students may come to JMU already equipped with. As I mentioned in my introduction, many students think they know the answer to the question, "what is plagiarism?" I would have told someone who asked me – as a student – that I knew the answer. And looking deeper into the question of perceptions about plagiarism I realized that a large body of writing exists calling plagiarism out in terms of danger, disease and dishonesty. So I've included an overview of some of the plagiarism rhetoric creating this atmosphere of fear and danger. If policy-makers are informed by a view of plagiarism that criminalizes and morally denigrates a student accused of plagiarism (without the clarity of a constant and useful definition) this could affect the university's ability to accept cultural shifts in their thinking about plagiarism policy and this rhetoric of danger could be passed on to students through the documents used by the university when communicating plagiarism information. Additionally, in light of the danger-rhetoric surrounding plagiarism is the question of "why students cheat" (and the accompanying rhetorical assumption that all plagiarism is "cheating" when seen in that light). What motivates students to acts of plagiarism – by any definition – is worth examining for the value such scholarship has to the overall discussions of what actions should be considered offenses – as well as informing the creators of policy and the documents the university communicates through. Understanding, or misunderstanding, the reasons students choose to cheat can aid in shaping the creation of resources to better educate students about the types of activities they engage in as writers (and creators, researchers, and artists) in an academic setting.

The last section of the literature review looks into an overview of some of the writing on the issues of how plagiarism is viewed as an offense and the sanctions imposed for violations – both academic sanctions from the university and sanctions involving moral and emotional consequences. Examining the ideas surrounding the sanctioning of plagiarism is part of the process in looking at how a university such as JMU can build policy around the actions and the guidance that is then suggested to instructors for the best ways to proceed when an instance of plagiarism arises in their classroom.

Since so much has been written about the offense of plagiarism I wanted to cover the problem while keeping the point of view of JMU. Specifically, by examining the documents used to communicate plagiarism policy and sanction to JMU students and this review of some of the pertinent thinking in the field helps to establish the review of those documents.

Definitions and Why They Might Be Important

An important consideration is to look carefully at definitions of plagiarism. Different universities and different scholars writing on the subject define the term differently (if often similarly). These different definitions offer a glimpse into the difficulty of creating one reliable standard for a university – and as the basis of forming sound policy for plagiarism will be shaped, throughout the decision-making process – by the words chosen to determine what constitutes an act of plagiarism.

One of the touchstone works in the research of plagiarism is Richard Posner's, *The Little Book of Plagiarism.* Posner's book asks a lot of questions, and complicates the issue of plagiarism, while also seeking to get a more firm grip on the subject. He writes

about the difficulties of coming to just one 'definition' of plagiarism. Of most

importance is the idea that plagiarism is more than just "literary theft" and can include

"plagiarism of music, pictures, or ideas, as well as verbal matter" (17).

But if Posner is right, if plagiarism is so difficult to define, how do those charged

with the task do so? Judging by the standards at JMU the idea is to take the strictest

stance and work backwards from there with individual cases. At JMU, the plagiarism

definition which shows up in the GWRTC 103 syllabus seems relatively straightforward,

"the presentation of another person's work as your own, whether you mean to or not.

A problem with locating definitions of plagiarism, as well as scholarly discussion,

stems from two issues. The first is the nature of how plagiarism is viewed in the

academic community and although changing – it is field of study often looked at in a

practical, not theoretical manner. The second issue arises from the interplay between

scholarly writing discussing the nature of plagiarism and the artifacts formed to enact

actual policy on university campuses.

Rebecca Moore Howard makes the case for the first issue, stating, "to bring

theory to bear on this field is an unusual move. Plagiarism is an undertheorized field,

commonly regarded as a distasteful, instrumental, necessary function of pedagogy,

unrelated to theory" (Howard, Standing… xviii). Howard is a leading voice in plagiarism

research, working extensively throughout her career to change views and definitions of

plagiarism and to change the conversation about plagiarism's value as a subject of serious

theoretical work. Naturally, her work makes an excellent place to begin examining the

various constructed definitions of plagiarism. Howard opens her book, *Standing in the

Shadow of Giants: Plagiarists, Authors, Collaborators,* with some discussion of the

difficulties facing discussion of plagiarism, with the three things she mentions being, how to catch plagiarists, how to punish them, and what is the definition of plagiarism anyway (4). She cites the difficulty in arriving at a consistent definition and the anxiety this causes for professors, saying, "College teachers feel "tentative" and "embarrassed"" and "take for granted that no commonly held definition of plagiarism exists" (4). Though Howard goes on to discuss the difficulties in arriving at a consensus definition of plagiarism, and considers the term potentially "indefinable" she offers the following commentary on what constitutes the activities which could/are often defined as plagiarism,

> "The 20th-century plagiarist potentially engages in any one of a disparate set of textual activities. He or she may (1) purchase, download, or copy a term paper; (2) copy text without supplying quotation marks; copy text without identifying the source; use ideas from a source without acknowledging the indebtedness; or (3) talk about a source while using language clearly derived from it. Nor is the collection of these varied activities under the unitary label *plagiarism* an accident" (Howard, Standing… 96).

She goes on to contend that there is a cultural function for organizing the activities which constitute plagiarism this to allow for separating "the geniuses – those for whom stylish, seemingly originary writing is an untaught gift – from the plodders, the mere copyists who textual appropriations are so obvious that the attribution of originality is impossible" (96). This structure serves the purpose of preserving "sociointellectual hierarchies" by marking the ability to hide the traces of collaboration with "esoteric skill"

and further it allows the "conflation" of the "inability or failure to hide those traces with

the willingness to fraudulently represent someone else's text as one's own" (96). The

gatekeeping nature of this construction of plagiarism leaves students without authority,

especially early in their careers as writers, and focuses only on what students produce as

an object rather than giving proper weight to their needs or intentions as authors

(Howard, Standing… 162). The issue of intent – or even more specifically, what the

potentially plagiaristic actions are accomplishing – is important to Howard's view. She is

taking apart her three actions mentioned above and discussing how these actions may

function differently for students, and how this behavior should offer more opportunities

to instructors and students instead of being cause for sanction. The border, for Howard,

between the first behavior – buying or outright copying and the other behaviors – not

using proper citation conventions or using derivative language from a source when

writing about it, is distinct and should not be unified under the heading of plagiarism. She

offers a new definition for some of the behaviors currently classified as plagiarism,

referring to this category as "patchwriting" (4). I will discuss the effects of her

patchwriting category more when examining the literature concerning the changing face

of plagiarism, but the implications for removing these behaviors from the typical

definitions of plagiarism in this way are important because she offers the view that

opening up patchwriting as a viable student strategy – as students use the language of

their sources to learn how to write in the academic culture they are entering instead of

sanctioning it offers a potential to reduce the problems of plagiarism (4,7). Howard is not

the only one distinguishing this issue of intent and function.

Susan Blum, a teacher and anthropologist working at the University of Notre Dame takes on the difficulties of defining plagiarism by starting with the idea that "words are used in a variety of ways; natural language as used in society is always fuzzy. The first point to make, then, in understanding plagiarism is that it involves a range of behavior" (Blum, 12). She takes on plagiarism from the point of view that it can be defined by the actions which constitute plagiarism with "kinds" that can vary in how "bad" they are. Her definition starts with, "the term at its core means to copy someone else's work; even paraphrasing without attribution counts as plagiarism" (12). But she is quick to back away from making this a definitive statement saying that even when you have make such a seemingly clear statement about plagiarism it is still "murky" (12). A part of her solution is to examine plagiarism as three behaviors that she puts on the corners of a triangle. At one point is plagiarism as cheating. Under this heading she includes behaviors where the student "knowingly, willfully, unambiguously engages in forbidden behavior such as buying a term paper." She calls this an academic crime, because, "academic credit is received without the work being done" (12). Her second corner of the triangle is inadvertent plagiarism, which "results from a failure to master conventions" (13). This language echoes some of Howard's sentiments as Blum goes on to explain that "proper citation practices are difficult skills to acquire; they can be learned only through slow, careful teaching" (13). At this corner, plagiarism is presumed to be unintentional, separating it from the intentional behaviors of her first corner. The third corner does not concern student work, but rather the work of professionals who actively steal from other writers (13). Though my initial interest in this area was sparked by such a case, such matters are not focal points of this writing. Since Blum's focus in her book

is on plagiarism as it fits into the culture and lives of college students she comes back often to her idea that definitions remain "wobbly" and guidelines for dealing with plagiarism tend to treat it as either a crime, or a sin (149) though she rejects the usefulness of defining plagiarism in these ways based on her triangle of behaviors. Further, she takes the stance that defining plagiarism using these legalistic or ethical terms tends to create a situation where students may weigh other values such as friendship or a desire to help out as more important, more immediate than the tenuous pull of an academic policy (156). Under definitions which invoke academic honesty, integrity, or the value of an education (those that point to plagiarism as sin or crime) it becomes possible that plagiarism becomes a violation of other types of issues such as "questioning the foundations; weighing a different value over this one; imperfectly mastering the conventions; or knowingly violating the rules just because we can" (160). These ideas point to a view of plagiarism as a constructed issue; one that is difficult to define in a concrete fashion because beyond the first point of Blum's triangle, the knowing choice to cheat, it becomes increasingly difficult to pin down the nature of the offense and the appropriate policies or sanctions to cover such an offense.

Taking a different view on the issue in her book, *The Plagiarism Plague,* Vibiana Bowman – an assistant professor and research librarian at Rutgers starts with a strong statement about the nature of plagiarism. She writes, "plagiarism is a plague – it is infectious, pervasive, and rapidly spreading" (xi). This statement sets the tone for the collection of essays she has assembled to answer the call for "conquering this ethical epidemic" (xi). For her, plagiarism is an ethical issue at the core and she opens her discussion of what plagiarism is with statistics about the number of students who are

turning in other's work or using paper mill sites (3). Her goals as a writer are primarily

to offer a view of teachers as guardians and guides toward intellectual honesty and she

states that she believes that "most students do not set out to cheat or plagiarize

deliberately" and that most students are "unaware and uncertain about how to go about

writing an appropriate, scholarly paper" (5). For her, plagiarism is, at its root an ethical

failure, not always to be blamed on the student – equal onus is placed on the instructor to

properly prepare the student, but plagiarism is considered under this uniting vision – not

different aspects as exist for Howard or Blum but the raw definition as cheating. This

ethical focus once again invokes Blum's issue with how students may respond to such

views, and the competing values they might feel pulling at them. Despite her ethics-based

focus and assertion of the dangerous epidemic of plagiarism, Bowman never attempts a

clear, concise definition of plagiarism, focusing on, again, the behaviors engaged in by

students, the practices that make up plagiarism all representing that one term. Bowman

positions her text as a resource guide for educators – offering up guidance and solutions.

When plagiarism is viewed only through one lens though, it becomes more difficult to

separate out the issues of what is at stake for students – and this seems to be the course

taken by institutional policies, focusing plagiarism statements on manageable behaviors

or remaining vague as to the nature of the offense and discussing it in terms of

intentionality and sanction.

Discussing the situation with a focus on the humanities, Michael Grossberg's

essay, "History and the Disciplining of Plagiarism" begins by breaking down and

analyzing the five tenets of the American Historical Association's (AHA) definition of

plagiarism, adopted in 1987. These five tenets espouse a more strict view than proposed

by Howard or Blum. Grossberg, a professor of History and Law at Indiana University

considers the definition an authoritative statement for one Humanity's discipline

(History) and makes the distinction between organizational and experiential definitions,

citing the AHA definition as organizational. He highlights the important points of the

five tenets as follows:

"First, and most basically, it defined plagiarism as appropriating "the exact wording of

another author without attribution." Second it broadened the ethical misdeed to include

the appropriation without proper attribution of another person's concepts, theories,

rhetorical strategies, and interpretations. Third, the AHA definition declared plagiarism

to be the failure to acknowledge the work of another, regardless of intent… or ... form of

gain. Fourth, the definition also recognized that the appropriation of another's words or

ideas without proper attribution constituted an ethical … but not legal infraction unless it

slid into copyright infringement. Finally, the AHA declared enforcement to be a

collective responsibility" (160).

 The definition includes some points in conflict with the views of plagiarism

proposed by Howard or Blum. Specifically, the definition calls out the act of plagiarism

"regardless of intent." The question of intent seems to be one of the wobbly guidelines

discussed by Blum. Some attempts at definition feel it is important to judge a charge of

plagiarism based on intent and some choose to point out that intent doesn't matter, only

the product produced and the act of appropriation. Another interesting point of the AHA

definition is the final point, included as a defining characteristic but not focused on the

act (or the term) itself, but on the community of scholars the definition serves. This issue

of community and the injunction that enforcement is a responsibility of every member of

that community could have implications for policy decisions which take these tenets as part of their working language. For example, if an honor code or plagiarism policy requires reporting infractions – what happens to an instructor who chooses to handle incidents informally with their student? In closing the discussion of the AHA definition, Grossberg returns to the issue of fear in plagiarism discussions as well. He comments on how the AHA definition points out the importance and the primacy of language in humanities disciplines and "thus our commensurate fear about its misappropriation. Invoking this fear is part of the experiential definitions he discusses, and the issues of shame and criminality brought up in many scholarly works on the subject – but also how the nature of experiential issues also has prompted revisions to the AHA statement at least four times since its introduction and the worry of uncertainty that further tests of its validity are certain to arise. (159-160).

As I considered writers like Howard, Blum and Grossberg, I also wanted to look into some of the history of the plagiarism discussions. Reaching back into that history of plagiarism I read through Alexander Lindey's very comprehensive *Plagiarism and Originality* published in 1952. Lindey, like Posner is concerned with the law and is, by trade a lawyer. This tome covers plagiarism in encyclopedic detail, covering everything from the university to music and the arts. He spends considerable effort in the work to carefully differentiate the ideas of plagiarism, copyright, and piracy – and these terms are often commonly confused – and both Howard and Posner also comment on the way copyright and plagiarism, while not the same, continue to influence the respective writing and policy of each. Lindey defines plagiarism as "theft. It is the false assumption of authorship: the wrongful act of taking the product of another person's mind, and

presenting it as one's own" (2). He goes on to further discuss the use of the word theft in the definition, writing, "The terms, "literary theft," "literary larceny," and "literary piracy" recur constantly in discussions of plagiarism." He disputes the use of the word piracy, claiming that it denotes a different act, "a pirate makes no attempt to falsify … the plagiarist compounds the offense by posing as the originator" (3). This discussion seems to situate plagiarism as an intentional and deceitful act which is deliberate and ethically wrong. But shortly thereafter he returns to the discussion of the term theft as it applies to plagiarism and discusses how these terms are applied "regardless of wrongful intent" no matter if an act was "deliberate stealing" or "unconscious taking" (3). Lindey only touches on this idea of the possibility that such a taking may not be deliberate and then moves off into other discussions. It is interesting to me that the notion of the intent of the writer has become an important part of the more current, academic discussion of plagiarism issues. The possibility of inadvertent plagiarism is still contested by some writers and scholars and the value of certain practices commonly lumped together in plagiarism definitions is a large part of the discussion aimed at changing the academic view.

The most comprehensive definition I discovered in my attempts to get at the meaning of the term comes from Jean Liddell, a university Reference Librarian specialist in an article titled, "A Comprehensive Definition of Plagiarism." She introduces her piece by discussing the fuzzy nature of the definitions and compiling language culled from her own research. She covers all of the ground from statements about how plagiarism is lying, taking unfair advantage, stealing, taking, and appropriation. She then discusses how these issues are conflated with and sometimes confused by discussions of

Intellectual Property rights. Her definition, which aims to be as comprehensive as

possible,

>Plagiarism is the act of using someone else's words, ideas, organization,

>drawings, designs, illustrations, statistical data, computer programs,

inventions

>or any creative work as if it were new and original to you; this

>includes real and intellectual property and public domain material. It is

>the buying or procuring of papers, cutting and pasting from works on

>the Internet, not using quotation marks around direct quotes, paraphrasing

>and not citing original works, and it is having someone else write

>your paper or a substantial part of your paper and turning it in as if it

>were new and original to you. To avoid plagiarism, one must internalize,

>understand and reorganize material and make it one's own (49).

In her attempt to be as comprehensive as she can, the act of plagiarism is again

reduced to a list of behaviors to be monitored/avoided by the writer, but the last sentence

is what made this definition stand out. In her preceding work, Liddell does not discuss

issues of patchwriting or intent, she is focused on getting to the actions useful to define

plagiarisms parameters. But the injunction to internalize material, and reorganize it, is

interesting when considered side-by-side with the efforts of writers like Howard. While

Liddell's definition could certainly provide a concise catalogue of actions and issues, it

could also interact (with some minor alterations) with Howard's view of some of these

actions falling outside of the purview of plagiarism, but completely in the realm of asking

students to "internalize, understand, and reorganize." Such activities seem to make up the

act of patchwriting as a distinct behavior with different goals than a plagiarist as a student attempts to understand the new types of writing they are exposed to and asked to emulate.

In contrast, another comprehensive definition of what plagiarism entails is offered by David Leight in his essay, "Plagiarism as Metaphor." At the time of this article, Leight was a doctoral candidate at Temple University in the field of Rhetoric and Communication – and also a teacher at Reading Area Community College. I identified with Leight in this way – balancing the competing needs of student and instructor while considering the issue of plagiarism. He opens by discussing the need for more unified definitions of plagiarism and his own attempts to catalogue definitions as they appear across textbooks, handbooks, style guides, and other works. He then presents the following definition, "plagiarism can be represented by four dominant metaphors: plagiarism constitutes stealing and is therefore morally wrong; plagiarism is an ethical problem in which the plagiarist violates an unwritten code of conduct for students; plagiarism is a "borrowing" in which "credit" is left undelivered; and plagiarism is a failure to intellectualize like a member of the academy" (221). Leight goes on to examine these metaphors in more depth. He starts by addressing the concept of stealing, situating it in the argument over words and their presentation as being "owned" and thus property – writing that using someone else's words is "in every case the equivalent of taking a paper out of a roommate's desk, copying it, and submitting it as one's own" (222). He goes on to sum up by saying that for most scholars this metaphor is considered very literal, that "plagiarism is a formal word for literary stealing" (223). This gives power to the criminalizing language of plagiarism and the idea of "in every case" does not allow for changes such as Howard's attempts to break that formal word apart

into more usable chunks. In discussing the nature of ethical violation Leight sets up the

discussion by situating it as a violation of standards and marks it as especially appropriate

for first year writers whose profession is "student" (224). This metaphor also returns to

the discussion of shame and self-respect saying that the metaphor "binds" by

"suggest[ing] that the student is not doing … the work of learning (225) and discusses

how, for some scholars, this metaphor is most pervasive in arguing against inadvertent

plagiarism as a category to be treated differently because those who plagiarize

inadvertently are "worse because they think they're doing the right thing" (225).

Plagiarism as "borrowing is considered in much the same light as stealing – it is the

image of a "borrower who fails to return the item received" (225) and though he

discusses it further, much of the language overlaps with the stealing metaphor. The final

idea, plagiarism as "intellectual laziness" is a collection of ideas, from the deserving of

credit in the academy, "the suggestion that the plagiarist avoids doing valuable work that

would help not only him or her, but the entire academy as well," the thought of

plagiarism "undermining research", and finally the idea that plagiarism will lead to

writers/scholars incapable of critical thinking on their own (227). This metaphor offers

the most opportunity for change though, as Leight acknowledges that conversation

concerning unintentional plagiarism is sometimes being seen in a different light, though

even those presented are still far from Howard and Blum – still seeing danger in the

unintentional act of plagiarism and the need to understand that improper citation breaks

down the "integrity of a paper" and even because "it breaks down the system of the

academy" (228). Such injunctions are one extreme of the plagiarism discussion and

Leight's exploration of these metaphors that definitions are built on provides a good look

at the difficulty of changing the attitudes toward the approaches set out by Howard and others.

As these attempts to dissect the actions and behaviors used to define plagiarism show, the consensus is "wobbly" indeed. And these are only a sampling of the multitude of articles and books on the subject showing some of the sides in this discussion. The language of plagiarism in these definitions, while not consistent about what actually is plagiarism (or what should be considered an offense) does have some threads in common. The attempts to create definitions discuss intent and deception in most cases – though the possibility of inadvertent plagiarism is still in debate for some scholars. The issue of intent seems important for its policy implications. If a behavior is classed as plagiarism (by definition) but happens out of ignorance, or even a student's early attempts at mastering a new form of writing which they do not yet fully understand, then judgments against this student could be lighter, handled informally, or seen – as Howard is working toward – as a vital part of the learning process and not seen as a cause for sanction at all, but as a teaching opportunity. The distinction between a paper being purchased online then turned in and a case of failure to master conventions of a citation discipline do differ in authorial intent and the second case seems to benefit from instruction more than sanction.

Another fairly consistent issue in the attempts to define plagiarism is a centering on the behaviors and actions which should fall under the term. Though some of the writing brings up issues of how plagiarism is an offense with gatekeeping functions based on disciplinary standards some writers, such as Blum, see this activity as a cultural issue which can pit the expectations and ethics of students against the expectations of student

honor codes or individual professors/disciplines. To characterize plagiarism as a set of crimes or sins against learning creates the possibility for ethics to clash and the culture of students' desire to protect and help out fellow classmates could override the "community responsibility" espoused by the AHA statement when it comes to detection and enforcement. An additional effect of focusing the effort to define plagiarism on specific actions/behaviors is that it then allows those behaviors to be broken down into smaller categories – so that not every behavior currently covered by the term plagiarism may deserve to be there. This fits with Howard's efforts and Blum's triangle as they struggle with changing current perceptions and work to move the definitions to what they believe are more useful versions which allow students and instructors to work more organically and not be at odds with the honor codes or policies of their schools.

Those organizational policies do matter though and even as the conversation continues and definitions of plagiarism continue to evolve, universities and organizations still require definitions of plagiarism to become their official policies and to carry the weight of institutional rules. And students and instructors need these definitions – and the policies built from the definitions – to communicate clearly the expectations, the culture, of the university in the classroom setting. So while this discussion of definitions may be a starting point for an academic department to begin discussions of plagiarism policy, definitions are not enough. And again, Howard, Blum, and others are attempting to open new channels of communication about plagiarism and shape the conversation in directions which might allow instructors, universities, and organizations to improve their definitions and answer some of the pressing questions about how plagiarism policy should evolve.

A Changing Narrative of Plagiarism

In her essay, "Lest We Think the Revolution is a Revolution," Cynthia Selfe discusses how changes and advancements in technology shape the stories – or narratives – that cultures build around their day-to-day lives. Advances in technology can open up new opportunities, but the price of this opening is often a difficulty adjusting to these new narratives. In many cases, the new narrative is opposed – or more precisely – resisted by existing narratives. Selfe gives the example of the globalizing influence of the World Wide Web. Even though the technology of the Web improves communication, facilitates conversation, and allows for collaboration across barriers of time and distance once difficult to navigate by more conventional means; acceptance of this narrative also requires changing to accept a world view that is more connected, less independent, and more prone to crimes of collaboration. Traditional, nationalistic, or individualistic narratives tend to resist the new narrative of global communication, vying to be the dominant "story of us."

Selfe's essay is an interesting point to enter into the conversation concerning plagiarism. Universities are cultures. On each campus certain rules and norms dominate the daily lives of students, faculty, and administrators. The idea that Selfe's work sets up for this discussion begins with her statement, "it is easy for us … to believe that technological change leads to productive social change" (Selfe). The advance of technology provides great resources to students and educators, but also creates new challenges. The narratives which shape the view of these changes deeply affect the way students, professors, university administrators, and academic policy-makers create the strictures, definitions, explanations, and punishments that fill up university honor codes

and policies. This side of the issue is also addressed by Selfe discussing, "this optimism about technology often masks, in a peculiar way, however; a contrasting set of extremely potent fears" (Selfe). It is easy to become absorbed in the value of the technologies, or the fears about their potential dangers, but in order to shape conversation in a more productive direction, this work will attempt to examine several of the existing and emerging narratives surrounding plagiarism through the framework established by Selfe's view of where these narratives interact and clash. This paper is an exploration of several pieces of research and can only touch on some portions of the subject of plagiarism – and will focus primarily on discussing some of the issues of fear and confusion surrounding the subject, delve into the language used to describe and define the act, and take a look at James Madison University's resources for students concerning plagiarism. The role of emerging and extant technologies, both to enable plagiarism and for detection and enforcement is one of the threads tying this exploration together. Several new perceptions of plagiarism, outside of even purely technological change are emerging in discussion of plagiarism and as the rhetoric and thinking surrounding the issues change, so too will the policies, approaches, and sanctions adopted by universities. Keeping the preceding definitions of plagiarism in mind, including the concepts of intent, recklessness, ignorance of conventions and the legalistic, criminalizing language helps to examine the existing and changing scholarship of plagiarism studies.

Selfe's theory of changing cultural narratives shows that there is often resistance to new narratives – and perhaps in the definitions still being used at JMU and some other universities that resistance to opening up new discussions of plagiarism can still be seen.

Some writers are working to change the view of plagiarism and a good place to open the discussion is with Rebecca Moore Howard and her idea of "patchwriting."

Rebecca Moore Howard offers up a vision of patchwriting, a concept that complicates the definitions of plagiarism, sanctions for the offense, and is particularly suited for discussion of the issue as it relates to student-writers early in their academic careers. Howard speaks of the nature of patchwriting as a process where a student, trying to work their way into proper academic language may mimic, or even parse the words and phrases of a source author – using the ideas and language, as it were, to build their own student writing – but to a greater or lesser extent, paraphrasing, altering, and substituting language to complete the process.

By default, and by taking a "strictest" stance on plagiarism, this act would seem to constitute plagiarism by most definitions – but it complicates the issue as well, because, according to Howard:

> "…students' patchwriting is often a move toward membership in a discourse community, a means of learning unfamiliar language and ideas. Far from indicating a lack of respect for a source text, their patchwriting is a gesture of reverence. The patchwriter recognizes the profundity of the source and strives to join the conversation in which the source participates. To join this conversation, the patchwriter employs the language of the target community" (Howard, Standing… 7).

This idea is instructive, especially in light of many uses of the word fraud, and many definitions' insistence that committing the act of plagiarism is somehow stealing, but especially the idea that is deceitful. If a student is attempting to honestly work

toward a vocabulary inclusive of proper disciplinary phrasing, and if Howard is correct that this is an important stage of writing to learn (as well as learning to write) then how should it be viewed by the professor, at the classroom level, and if brought before a formal Honor Council, how should it be adjudicated? Before these questions can be answered (or answers even attempted), it is instructive to examine additional language concerning plagiarism and the consist ideas which appear.

Other writers are taking up the challenge of improving plagiarism practices at universities. Their writing shows a shift in the thinking of some scholars. Howard writes about the perception of plagiarism as a case not worthy of serious scholarly attention and in her book *Standing in the Shadow of Giants: Plagiarists, Authors, Collaborators,* discusses the problem from the academic perspective and offers some insight,

> "Plagiarism is an undertheorized field, commonly regarded as a distasteful, instrumental, necessary function of pedagogy, unrelated to theory. Until very recently, scholarly discussion of plagiarism assumed it to be a natural (though loathsome) category, not a constructed one; hence, these discussions did not undertake causal and evaluative arguments about the construction of plagiarism and the cultural work that this construction performs" (xviii-xix).

This discussion of the issue in terms of the "cultural work" is intriguing considered in the light of trying to build effective policies surrounding plagiarism which go beyond simple "strictest definition" punishment, but also include higher stakes than informal sanctions and a single failing grade. Specifically, it is interesting to consider the "distasteful" nature of plagiarism and how it is an area that is not only a blight on the

record of the offender, but also reflects back onto policy-makers and writers wishing to discuss the issue.   Despite this negative connotation, the situation is changing and new views are emerging in attempts to make plagiarism studies a useful part of academic life – focusing on helping students, professors, and administrators not only to better understand what is at stake, but also what might be done to improve the situation.

In her essay, "Situating Plagiarism as a Form of Authorship: the Politics of Writing in a First Year Writing Course" Amy Robillard, an Assistant Professor of English at Illinois State University offers a new vision for approaching plagiarism education. She offers to her reader the possibility of engaging students in the discussion of plagiarism without raising their defenses (31). Her goal is to engage students through a new approach which "focuses not on *plagiarizing* as a verb, but on plagiarism as a noun, an object of study" (31). She hopes that this method of inquiry will give students some insight into the "cultural work of plagiarism in capitalist society that glorifies the work of the individual creator" (31). By again concerning the student with what plagiarism is instead of simply what actions are to be avoided, Robillard hopes to change the perception of students. Her ultimate goal is to have students gain some understanding of how plagiarism can be related to many different kinds of authorship (31) instead of being viewed in relation to other crimes (that is, how plagiarism is often labeled as fraud or stealing).

It is an interesting approach which not only changes perceptions for students but offers a new narrative of the role of plagiarism (or even just the accusation of plagiarism) in culture. She wants to ask, "How does plagiarism in its noun form function both inside and outside the classroom" (32)? Her design for this work focuses on students working

together to investigate different forms of authorship through a carefully guided sequence of work to reposition plagiarism not just as a cop-out for students but rather to complicate the question of culture. As an example, some of the work for her students focuses on the cultural effect of accusations of plagiarism and how it is "more than just a textual crime; it is a moral stain on the author" (35). The piece in question is not an academic piece of writing but engages students in the discussion of the moral and ethical nature of plagiarism as an offense – and the difficulties this can create. From here Robillard can move into a better discussion of the culture of student plagiarism. She opened the essay with a statement concerning how the repeated imprecations students hear over the years allow them to "likely become increasingly immune to the warnings and threats" (27). Because of this she wanted to engage students in a dialogue about why plagiarism happens and what the effects of such acts are culturally as a means of allowing students to feel safer investigating the issue among themselves and open discussion.

This perception of plagiarism situated in other forms of authorship fits well in the discussion of changing the narrative where plagiarism education is concerned and could provide an opportunity for first-year writing instructors to emulate this sequence, adapted to their own university culture as a means for better preparing students – not with the threat of plagiarism and another round of citation rules – but as a means of further inviting students to be part of the academic culture around them.

Another concern, raised in a study by Shelley Yeo is, "[I]nstitutional publications and 'how to avoid plagiarism' websites frequently use instructional material illustrated by the discourse and activities of students in nonscientific subjects—even though some publicized cases of plagiarism have involved the appropriation or misuse of experimental

data. In the light of this, do science and engineering students make good sense of information related to plagiarism" (199)? Students are often presented with plagiarism information that may not be completely useful in a discipline other than composition. Her concern raises an interesting question which goes beyond first year students. Does plagiarism education appropriately cross disciplinary boundaries to address the needs of students in science, engineering, and other non-composition fields? This question still concerns the cultural of the university since inter-disciplinary issues are involved in the General Education curriculum at JMU and students may not always understand the necessity of the GenEd courses they are required to take. Some writers are considering this approach though and presenting ideas for integrating such writing more fully into the GenEd curriculum.

These concerns – about the nature of plagiarism offenses and the need for more instruction that applies across disciplines more readily as well as the sanctions leveled – is articulated by Sandra Jamieson in her essay, "*One Size Does Not Fit All: Plagiarism Across the Curriculum."* An English professor at Drew University, Sandra Jamieson is also the Director of Composition – and has co-authored several books with Rebecca Moore Howard. She writes about her work with creating a new academic integrity policy for Drew University and the struggle between the need to acculturate students to different styles of academic writing versus strictly viewing plagiarism as an ethical issue tied up in misuse of resources (79). She uses her university's example of using the language of "intentional" versus "unintentional" as determiners for the severity of sanctions and refers Drew University's policy of ""administrative resolution" for first and second year students who "unintentionally misuse sources" (79). The difference being that at the

upper levels professors are required to report incidents and sanctions must be officially

leveled. For Jamieson, part of the educational problem with "universal source-use

policies and generic instruction in first-year composition … [is that these policies]

actually reduces the ability of students to join the discourse communities of the

disciplines and undermines the very goals of composition" (81). She discusses how

students presented with one universal view early in their education may come to view

discipline specific changes as changes rooted in the style of specific professors'

expectations while obfuscating the "fundamental differences between academic discourse

communities" (79). Her goal is to broaden the discussion of source-use but not allow it

to become simply a generic listing of rules (83-84). This is in line with some changing

views of "good writing" and Howard's ideas about how certain types of source use are a

way for beginning writers to work their way into the disciplines they are approaching.

Jamieson concludes that the way many beginning academic writers, entering into their

disciplines, integrate sources is on-par with the way the writers themselves are not yet

fully acculturated (89) and that the marks of a writer trying to become more integrated

into their disciplinary style may not always be worth charges of misuse (that is,

plagiarism).

Beyond discipline differences, the cultural differences of students also play into

understanding plagiarism. JMU is an institution proud of its international students and

international programs and so understanding the different ideas about plagiarism and

correct use of academic source materials is important to the policy maker. A Thai study,

"The Influence of Achievement Goal Orientation on Plagiarism" by Koul, et al, points

out that societal differences between high context cultures and low context cultures are

significant to the act and especially intent involved in plagiarism. Again, taking into

account the strict definition at JMU that even unintentional plagiarism is worthy of

sanction as an offense, it is important to consider how cultural differences apply as well.

This study discusses the issue that students from Eastern cultures may not have the same

perceptions of authorship and ownership as a traditionally Western-educated student,

> The motive matters when describing plagiarism. And as a result of
>
> the primacy of relationship orientation, motives may be especially critical
>
> to personal attitudes towards plagiarism in eastern cultures.
>
> Whether copying is regarded as plagiarism is influenced not only
>
> by motive, but also the particular source of the material. The concept of
>
> plagiarism requires that there be an 'author' from whom the material is
>
> copied. Having a relationship with that author, for example a close friend
>
> or confidant versus an unknown or distant expert or source, has
>
> implications for whether the act of copying is regarded as plagiarism.
>
> Depending on how you view the act you might, for example, 'borrow'
>
> from a friend but not from a stranger (Koul, et al 507).

It seems possible that simply explaining the issue to a student who has been

educationally prepared in this way may not be enough. Such a student might understand

the discussion in terms of expert sources but still overlook the related difficulties of

unacceptable collaboration or borrowing from the work of fellow students. And in a one-

size-fits-all set of policies and sanctions, more care may be warranted to communicate

with these students to prepare them to enter the JMU academic culture. This seems

especially true when considering the high stakes and criminalizing language still used by

many universities and organizational authorities. Students are often worried about plagiarism, and books such as Bowman's, *The Plagiarism Plague* root the discussion in this concern about the epidemic nature of plagiarism. So these changes, are met with resistance, and one area of resistance comes from the sense of fear and danger which still pervades plagiarism discussions. If changes are to be made to policy and to our thinking about plagiarism in the academy, then addressing the fear language becomes an important issue.

Plagiarism's Rhetoric of Fear and Danger

One common discussion which is mentioned by many writers on the subject of plagiarism is the distinct focus on plagiarism as a crime, or moral failure. Chere Hardin Blair, writes about the rhetoric of danger surrounding plagiarism studies, stating,

> Whether or not instances are increasing, I acknowledge a real need to deal with academic dishonesty, along with general alarm about the use of the Internet to facilitate cheating…

> A cursory search of US library holdings reveals more than 400 books dealing with academic dishonesty catalogued since 2000, with titles including such wording as "Ravages of Plagiarism" and "The Plagiarism Plague," and written for audiences from elementary school students to academics and university administrators. (160-61).

Even though many students may not be exposed to such writing for the majority of their academic career, it is important to consider the different audiences for these texts and how it relates to discussions concerning how the different stakeholders, students, instructors, administrators, might see the problem of plagiarism differently. Research for

this paper turned up several writings of a similar type including, "Identifying and Profiling Scholastic Cheaters: Their Personality, Cognitive Ability, and Motivation" which attempts to profile "cheaters" (a loaded word itself) based on their level of psychopathy and "Sins Against Science" which explains that "scientific misconduct may be more prevalent than you think" while discussing data fabrication and plagiarism.

Looking at one of the pieces mentioned by Blair, *The Plagiarism Plague,* turns up some intense reading. The book opening statement mentioned before in discussing the language used to define plagiarism, "Plagiarism is a plague – it is infectious, pervasive, and rapidly spreading" (Bowman, xi) quickly moves on with language such as the call to action, "Conquering this ethical epidemic…" and refers to the current "crisis" (xi). All that anxiety appears on just the first page of the preface. Consider the audience for the text – educators and librarians, and what message is the opening sending to these readers? It doesn't sound calm or hopeful. The table of contents offers chapters such as "Teaching Intellectual Honesty in a Tragically Hip World" and "The Dark Side of the Web: Where to Go to Buy a Paper." Of course, reading deeper, the book explores other useful topics and provides policy models for universities struggling with the best ways to define and organize a plagiarism policy, but the impression given from the language of the text is that of a culture on the brink of a disastrous epidemic.

Rebecca Moore Howard discusses what she sees in this perception of plagiarists,

> "The label plagiarist marks and criminalizes … a textual "Other" that is widely feared in contemporary Western culture. Writers fear they will succumb to "influence" that will stifle their creativity. They worry, too, that others will plagiarize their work. Not only writers but everyone

fears the plagiarists, fears their contaminating influence, fears the threat

they pose to the values of print culture" (Howard, Standing… 23).

Again we see a normative cultural narrative at work in this thinking and this type of cultural repugnance is important to consider in light of the rhetoric surrounding plagiarism, as well as the way in which statistics about plagiarism seem to imply that the threat continues to grow. From the point of view of a researcher, a professor, or a university administrator, the picture painted by these narratives of plagiarism makes for some pretty bleak reading.

Chere Hardin Blair discusses further how "hysteria seems to be the historical response to major textual shifts, including the most recent technological revolution" (161). This assessment matches Selfe's view of the clashing of narratives – accepting the value of the new technologies (the internet/web, especially as a means for plagiarism detection and thus a "solution") also allows for the possibility of a "doom" brought on by increasing academic dishonesty.

From the student perspective, fear also plays a role in determining student reactions to the looming specter of plagiarism. Students are anxious about the unintentional act of plagiarism, the severity of consequences should they be accused, and the repercussions (and ethical issues) of the introduction of software, such as Turnitin to detect plagiarism in their work. If even a charge of plagiarism marks one as "cultural other" as Howard states it and with so much at stake concerning the possible punishments, how are students going to react to a professor, as mentioned in Wendy Sutherland-Smith's study who don't believe unintentional plagiarism exists or a

university policy such as UNC's which characterizes plagiarists as "reckless" and for whom ignorance is no defense?

Judith Gullifer and Graham Tyson created a study to delve into student perceptions of plagiarism. Their study centered on focus groups of university students who performed activities and discussed plagiarism issues as related to their lives. The point of the study was to generate useful data to help shape further policy for Australian universities. Gullifer and Tyson divided their findings into six themes that consistently appeared in student perceptions: "confusion, fear, perceived sanctions, perceived seriousness, academic consequences, and resentment" (463).

Fear is the relevant theme of the discussion here, but examining the findings concerning consequences and resentment equally demonstrate the lack of correct knowledge and the anxiety felt by students concerning the subject. The primary issue of fear brought up by the students in the focus groups was that of inadvertent plagiarism. Students are anxious about making mistakes which could lead to severe sanctions. One participant is quoted as saying, "Yeah I quote way too much, like you are scared, I am scared to write my own words in case they are someone else's but I didn't know about it" (Gullifer and Tyson 473). They go on to discuss the issues caused for learning when a student suffers from such a lack of confidence. Students who are dealing with this anxiety often suffer in practice by "working to avoid plagiarism at all costs, even if it means resorting to poor writing strategies" (Gullifer and Tyson 474).

It also seems, if students are focused on the issue of inadvertent plagiarism as the source of their anxiety, it is because "they don't understand the degrees of the offense, are confused about the nature of the offense and the suggestion "that a

combination of university expectations and sanctions, the difficulty in finding clear guidelines on minimizing plagiarism, along with the mistaken belief that the most minor errors could result in an allegation of plagiarism" (Gullifer and Tyson 475). It is important to note that much of the fear for students seems to stem from their confusion about issues of academic dishonesty.

Obviously, the student body of JMU cannot be generalized to all students everywhere, but the campus population is diverse, with international programs, adult degree students, traditional undergraduates, and graduate students in many disciplines – and these students are all bringing differing degrees of educational experience to their time here at JMU. The adult student, for example, may have been away from college for many years and may need resources to help review or improve their citation styles and writing strategies even more than a freshman recently graduated from High School. As an adult learner who returned to college after an 8 year absence, I remember my own struggles with re-learning the discourse conventions I needed at JMU (and especially in the TSC department). The answer for me, at that time, was to rely heavily on the good graces of one of my professors to provide me with guidance in such areas, but even the introductory courses for the Adult Degree Program focused on creating a practical course of study without much emphasis on the "culture of college." More acknowledgment of these difficulties would have eased the transition back into the university.

In light of this ongoing sense of serious consequences, and with some evidence in hand that lack of guidance accounts for much of the student anxiety, it is sometimes difficult then to understand why students would choose to plagiarize? Even accepting the strict stance currently enforced and assuming the worst of students; why take the chance

of expulsion, or failing grades – why not expend further energy to master the discipline conventions or more time to write a paper instead of choosing to buy it?

An Examination of Beliefs Concerning Why Students Plagiarize

The WPA Statement of Best Practices includes a bulleted list of their most explicable reasons why students choose to plagiarize, ranging across the spectrum including the fear of failure, poor time management skills, a perception that the course they are taking or the consequences of their actions are unimportant, poorly created assignments from faculty, and all the way to the difficulty created when instructors don't formally report plagiarism or don't enforce penalties that should be connected closely to the offense (CWPA). An interesting addendum to the WPA list of reasons why students may plagiarize is another, even longer list of behaviors that may be classified as plagiarism in most universities but are not considered so by the CWPA's Best Practices. Specifically of interest are the first three bullets – calling out errors of misuse by students resulting from ignorance of proper ways to work (CWPA). This flies in the face of some of the definitions given earlier and such conflicting views about what makes for good policy are also called out by the WPA as they cite the differences in perception of plagiarism between students, instructors, and different institutions (CWPA) – which can all lead to different behaviors being an offense in different situations.

A full accounting of all the research and reasons why students choose to plagiarize could fill a book by themselves, but some of the important points can be discussed here – and many seem to proceed from the points established by the WPA, though some go beyond their list as well.

One such discussion comes from Don McCabe, a professor at Rutgers concerned with student morality and academic integrity – who mentions that competition may be at the heart of many decisions to plagiarize. He says, in an interview with NPR, "They see other students cheating and getting away with it and getting ahead in this great GPA race, which makes them feel like they're being "unfairly" left behind" (NPR). This connects to data from the study by Koul, et al discussing performance goal orientation. The interesting factor that comes from this study is the idea that performance orientation in a classroom or, "a focus on how one's competence or ability will be judged relative to others" (Koul, et al 507), may be a contributing factor in plagiarism decisions. The authors go on to discuss the idea that plagiarism, while an improper strategy, could be an adaptation for students with a serious performance orientation:

"As with cheating, intentional plagiarism, by western standards, is a maladaptive strategy, less likely to be observed in students with a high mastery orientation. Plagiarism could however be viewed as an adaptive strategy for an individual with performance orientation whose goal is to maximize scores" (Koul, et al 507).

Though more research would be needed, and I cannot make any conclusive statements, it is possible that the "standardized testing culture" of primary and secondary education could create a perception of this type of performance orientation. Education is a highly competitive endeavor for many students, and collaboration is often frowned upon – especially in testing situations. It is also interesting to note at this point that the authors cite another study done in 2004 to discuss how students moving from a more competitive environment to a less competitive one created a drop in cheating, while the reverse was also true (Anderman and Midgely, qtd in Koul, et al). Again, at this point this

is speculation only, but the implication exists, and could be further pursued concerning the nature of performance orientation, the classroom environment, and projected student outcomes in relation to academically dishonest behavior including plagiarism.

As a brief aside, student instruction in primary and secondary education – at least in the state of Virginia – may be changing though to accommodate new views on plagiarism instruction. When I searched the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) for any discussion of plagiarism, the currently enforced versions begin introducing specific plagiarism instruction as early as the third grade where students are asked to be able to "understand the difference between plagiarism and their own words" (VDOE). This is an interesting task to set for students who are approximately eight years old considering the debate such a topic still raises in scholarly discussions. This injunction differentiating between plagiarism and "own words" is mentioned again in fourth grade, and then in fifth grade the language changes to ask students to "define the meaning and consequences of plagiarism" (VDOE). No specific language is provided as part of this documentation to set the standard for what that definition should be though – leaving it in the hands of school districts, principals, and Language Arts teachers across the state. Sixth grade students get another layer added on – focusing on the legal and ethical guidelines for using information. The same language appears in seventh and eighth grade, but for the first time students are being instructed in the use of a format – either MLA or APA. The eighth grade SOLs also specifically call out graphs, drawings, ideas and opinions as in need of citation. The high school years 9th – 12th grade don't add any new information to the language of plagiarism standards – and in fact drop any mention of formatting styles. In November of 2010, the Virginia Department of Education issued a report comparing

the Virginia SOLs for English instruction with the Common Core State Standards

(CCSS) and attempting to bring the two documents into better alignment. The CCSS

don't mention plagiarism instruction until sixth grade and the language is even less well-

defined than the current language in the SOL framework. These decisions are being made

by the school systems of Virginia right now for the upcoming school years. It might be

interesting to examine the SOLs again in a year and determine if plagiarism instruction

becomes de-emphasized in relation to skill-based learning. Such a shift might chip away

at what the CWPA seems to believe is already a rocky foundation for students

transitioning from High School to college. A question beyond the scope of this

examination, but perhaps worth further study is the question of what students are actually

being taught concerning plagiarism in secondary education – and how to recognize it. In

a resource text concerned with the teaching of plagiarism at the secondary level, Ann

Lathrop and Kathleen Foss offer this advice to teachers as a means to explain plagiarism

to students, "If you had any help that you don't want your teacher or parents to know

about, you probably cheated" (Lathrop and Foss 6). Such as view may actually be

misleading, considering the question of student ignorance of the problem. Students may

not recognize that what they've done is even an issue.

Considering the amount of introduction students may have before even arriving at

the university and the question of ignorance as a reason or defense for plagiarism, I

looked at another study by Marcia Devlin and Kathleen Gray, working out of the

University of Melbourne which also supports the idea that a primary cause of student

plagiarism is that students may simply not understand the nature of the offense, leading to

inadvertent plagiarism, and the idea that there is little chance of being caught, and if they

are caught, punishment is seen as light or ineffective (183). Assuming that this is true –

how much of the burden is on first-year instructors and the university administration to

effectively educate students about the issues of plagiarism, and how should the university

explain to students the sanctions they'll face should they be convicted of plagiarism? If

students do not understand the issues, or what is at stake, whose job is it to provide these

answers?

Of course, not all academics agree that such a thing as unintentional plagiarism

even exists. In a study conducted by Wendy Sutherland-Smith, "Academic Perceptions

of Student Plagiarism" some professors go on record as believing that "all acts of copying

are plagiarism and intention is automatically proven" (89). She goes on to quote one

professor's statement, "Saying that there is such a thing as unintentional plagiarism is a

bit of a cop out, really. I mean, how do you know what a student really intended?" (89).

Ultimately, Sutherland-Smith makes the point, in concluding her research, that "whilst

teachers operate collaboratively in the preparation and delivery of academic writing

preparation programs, they approach issues of plagiarism within those programs

individually" (94). As a senior instructor at Deakin University's Institute for Teaching

and Learning, she advocates for reaching across policy and departmental boundaries and

considering new ways to address plagiarism "publicly and effectively" (94).

Issues of Offense and Sanction

In light of the discussion of definitions and the attempt to clarify why students

choose to plagiarize it is also important to consider how it is being deal with as an offense

– and what the sanctions against offenders may communicate. How does a university go

about designing clear cut policies for plagiarism? The first step would be to define

plagiarism itself. Finding one definition for plagiarism has proven difficult though. As previously discussed, different interpretations are common, both in scholarly writing and in texts which claim authority in certain areas of writing. Each discipline may even have different standards, from the MLA to the APA to the AHA. Equally daunting is the task of assigning consequences for infractions of the policies – where do the lines get drawn? Is inadvertent plagiarism the same as willful plagiarism? Several sources approximate between 40% to 80% of university students admit to some form of plagiarism (Batane; Blair). These numbers – assuming the validity of them since they represent self-reported behaviors – represent, even at the low end, a surprising number of students willing to risk their academic careers, especially in light of previous discussion of student anxiety about plagiarism.

If clear-cut definitions and differences over institutional values remains so difficult to reconcile, it becomes difficult to imagine the manner in which a university can navigate a charge of plagiarism when it is not as clear cut as simple copying. Again turning to Richard Posner's book, an interesting idea which appears at this point is that,

> A judgement of plagiarism requires that the copying, besides being deceitful in the sense of misleading the intended readers, induce *reliance* by them. By this I mean that the reader does something because he thinks he knows the truth … He buys a book that he wouldn't have bought had he known it contained large swatches of another writer's book; he would have bought that other writer's book instead. Or if he's a teacher he gives a bad student a good grade, to the prejudice of other students in the class

(if the students are graded on a curve), thinking the student's paper

original (Posner 24).

This judgment still leaves questions unanswered for the policy-maker in an academic setting though. If plagiarism requires deceit, then can a student be punished for inadvertent plagiarism? What happens when the student "copies" but has no intention of deceiving because the copying is the result of what the WPA statement would term "misuse of sources?" These questions are not easily answered – and administrators have tough work ahead to decide these issues. Posner goes on to discuss the difficulty of adjudicating plagiarism charges in this way and the need to create a graded scale of punishments for different types of offenses (55).

Posner is discussing plagiarism from the point of view of a culture that incentivizes originality and "authorship" with financial recompense, good grades, or career advancement. The type of advancement previously discussed which might induce a student to choose to plagiarize, which is interesting since it works on both sides of the issue. Viewed in that light, the narrative of the author that has emerged has become the dominant narrative. So how is a university to make and sustain a solid academic integrity policy, allowing enforcement but not discouraging creativity?

Gary K. Clabaugh and Edward G. Rozycki, in *The Plagiarism Book* write, "In college plagiarism it could lead to a failing course, getting hauled before a judicial committee, kicked out of your major or even thrown out of school. Even long-tenured professors have been dismissed for plagiarism. This sort of dishonesty is taken very seriously in Academia" (Clabaugh and Rozycki vii). This agrees in tone with the statements by Koul (et al.) that "Instructors writing about plagiarism seem to view it

more as a violation of trust and of relationship norms rather than as literal theft, and such writing is often emotionally charged. Institutionally, however, plagiarism is regarded as theft and is handled much like property theft would be handled (507).

In light of such a disparity between the perceptions of plagiarism and the way it is presented to students, it is not difficult to see how some can come to regard plagiarism as either as something to be very afraid of, and therefore to restrict creativity, or the converse, to regard plagiarism with less than the appropriate gravity and therefore be unconcerned about committing it. In some cases, students may not view the issue as seriously as their teachers might – and in other cases might view it as necessary. Again referring to Don McCabe's NPR interview he says that "The top's cheating to thrive, the bottom's cheating to survive" (NPR).

If the statistics are to be believed though, and we accept that plagiarism is an "epidemic" then why doesn't the threat of sanctions, why doesn't the threat of cultural vilification work to stem the epidemic? James Ogilvie and Anna Stewart's (from Griffith University) study, "The Integration of Rational Choice and Self-Efficacy Theories: A Situational Analysis of Student Misconduct" which focused on plagiarism arrived at some interesting conclusions which could be of value to policy makers considering the best way to approach students concerning the decision to plagiarize,

> "In regards to the first research question, the objective manipulations of the certainty and severity of sanctions through the plagiarism scenarios were found to have no significant effects on intentions to engage in plagiarism. Participants' perceptions of the severity of sanctions did not differ across scenario groups, with perceptions of severity being high for

all groups. This may have occurred as a result of levels of severity not

being clearly differentiated across the scenarios. Alternatively, it was

possible that participants had inaccurate or poorly informed perceptions of

the consequences following academic misconduct. Most instances of

academic misconduct remain undetected by university authorities,

resulting in a situation where few students have direct contact with the

formal consequences resulting from detection.

Students' perceptions of the severity of sanctions for misconduct may be

limited by the lack of information available from which to construct such

perceptions. The result of this limited information may be that students

erroneously perceive the sanctions applied to those who engage in

misconduct as highly punitive.

Similar to perceptions of severity, increased certainty of detection for

plagiarism had no deterrent effect on participants' intentions to engage in

plagiarism" (147).

If this is true, if students are not deterred by the threat of sanction, even when they

perceive the sanctions to be "highly punitive" and if the lack of real knowledge of those

sanctions is part of the problem, then it becomes ever more important to consider the

cultural work necessary for the university – creating as Sandra Jamieson would have it, a

place where students don't learn about plagiarizing but rather about plagiarism – as a way

to connect the nature of the sanctions to the offense being committed.

Examining the culture of previous work writing about plagiarism (and often

lumped together with other forms of academic dishonesty making it that much harder to

separate out plagiarism issues) there was a specific leaning toward trying to identify the

markers of plagiarism, the reasons students choose to cheat, or methods to detect or

eliminate plagiarism. Some of the scholarship on the subject seems almost self-

conscious, discussing plagiarism from the point of view of an ethical or business

problem, where the value of what students create; the commodification of the written

word or of ideas, is at the heart of why plagiarism is such a difficult issue. One author,

Marilyn Randall goes so far as to call plagiarism, "a mode of guerilla warfare directed

against an oppressive hegemony" (Randall xiii). She goes further to say,

'Postmodern plagiarism' is also the logical consequence of the (theoretical) 'death' of the

author and of the humanist subject, which becomes the contemporary condition of (non)-

authorship introduced in the first chapter (xiii). Randall's discussion eventually turns

back to issues reminiscent of the cultural shift alluded to by Ms. Hegeman (who was my

entry point into this whole work) when she discusses her ideas about the future of

plagiarism, "What are the consequences for the aesthetic and legal status of 'plagiarism'

in an age that proclaims not only the 'death of the author' but 'appropriation' as an

aesthetic and technological practice?"

Without going so far afield as Randall, an interesting step in the discussion of

arises again from the work of Rebecca Moore Howard when she works with patchwriting

and the accusation of plagiarism – it often gets identified as such – but she argues instead

that instances of this strategy found in student writing are teachable moments, and

valuable parts of the process of becoming an academic writer rather than a cause to stand

before a disciplinary committee (Howard, Plagiarisms… 788). Howard's work has a

great deal of value to professors concerned with first-year writing and students just

entering into the academic conversation at the college level. Howard is not inviting warfare with the establishment (guerilla or otherwise) and is careful to note that,

> If teachers are to adopt a positive approach, they must be able to do so within the strictures of their universities' regulations on plagiarism. Those regulations, however, typically describe plagiarism in all its forms as a problem for adjudication, and this generalization leaves teachers little space for pedagogical alternatives. In typical college regulations on plagiarism (which are often grouped under headings wherein plagiarism serves as either a synonym for or a subset of "academic dishonesty"), all forms of plagiarism, including patchwriting, are located on a juridical continuum on which expulsion from college-the academic death penalty-sits at the extreme end as a potential punishment (Howard, Plagiarisms… 789).

Randall and Howard are wrestling with both pedagogical and administrative issues in their responses to plagiarism – and often the difficulty in reconciling the needs of these two different groups in the university setting are at the heart of plagiarism policy issues. Howard is trying to broaden the definitions and leeway given to instructors to improve their students while not diluting the need for or effectiveness of, plagiarism detection and sanctioning.

The danger to students in this wrestling is further examined as Howard breaks down ideas about authorship, including the often fractious nature of the academy and scholarship,

"The principle used for the task of unifying and stabilizing student

plagiarism is the putative morality of the "true" (autonomous) author.

Immorality in these representations is not attributed just to some

plagiarists, such as those who purchase term papers. Rather, immorality

attaches to the practitioners of all textual practices, including patchwriting,

that are classified as plagiarism" (Howard, Plagiarisms… 789).

And the difference she brings up in this quote, the space between a student who

purchases a paper to turn in, fully aware of the action, whatever the reasons – and the

student who is guilty, as the WPA Statement says, of "the misuse of sources" (CWPA).

The current work of the CWPA agrees with Howard's view, citing how many of the

current policies of plagiarism do not work to mark the difference between "submitting

someone else's text as one's own or attempting to blur the line between one's own ideas

or words and those borrowed from another source" as opposed to "carelessly or

inadequately citing ideas and words borrowed from another source" (CWPA). The

CWPA considers only the first of these two statements plagiarism. The second student,

they say, "should be considered to have failed to cite and document sources

appropriately" (CWPA) and I would go further to suggest that it falls to the universities

to make instruments of policy which can distinguish between the two offenses and offer

students the guidance they need to correct behavior instead of sanctioning an offense the

student may not even understand.

Introductions to Plagiarism at JMU

Clear answers seem to be difficult to find when examining the literature of plagiarism research. Plagiarism is a concept which must be articulated by universities everywhere as well as writing handbooks, writing centers, and even individual instructors in their own classrooms. Looking at the literature of definitions and the rhetoric of fear and danger, contrasting that work to an evolving understanding of plagiarism, and thinking about the issues which lead students to decide to plagiarize – or at least, not report instances when they know of them – sets up the work of looking more closely at the narratives one university – JMU – uses to navigate the questions of plagiarism for (and with) their students.

One important focus of this paper is to examine some of the materials made available to students at JMU, specifically introductory materials available to students and which they might be expected to be familiar with (at least in passing) by their professors. More importantly, these resources form the groundwork of a JMU student's perception of plagiarism – so that when confronted with the issues, these are the resources they might (re)turn to. Specifically, I want to examine the Go for the Gold plagiarism site, the Student Handbook (inclusive of the Honor Code), and the plagiarism resources of the University Writing Center. While these documents could be approached in any order, I chose to examine them as I did when I considered my interaction with these documents as a student rather than the order I analyzed them as a researching graduate student. This order provided me with a clear progression of how the documents can interact as well as being indicative of at least one student's journey navigating the plagiarism situation at JMU, progressing from completion of Go for the Gold in the freshman year – along with

courses like GWRTC 103 (though not all students will take 103, or take it as first-years), and then moving on to those options linked by Go for the Gold such as the Honor Code, which is connected to the Student Handbook. Finally, the resources of the JMU University Writing Center Link Library become useful tools for a student who is engaged in their own work and needs further guidance. . As a student and instructor – beyond the role of researcher and writer – I found this examination educational. My experiences with the plagiarism resources available to a JMU student showed me that there is not one, unified narrative of plagiarism local to JMU – but rather, there seem to be four narratives in these resources. They are not entirely contradictory, but they are not linked, or comforting to a student who has questions. It seems as if these four narratives evolved independently and the university could benefit from reexamining these findings and presenting a more cohesive definition to the student body.

Narrative One: Go For The Gold

One of the first ways most JMU first year students will be introduced to the idea of plagiarism and academic dishonesty is the Go for the Gold (GftG) program – a part of the General Education requirements designed to guide students through different processes involving research and making best use of the libraries on campus. This training is divided into eight modules – with module 7 being about "Information Ethics" and concerned with teaching students about the proper use of citations and sources – including an injunction against plagiarism.

When I began considering the value of Go For the Gold as a resource for students concerning plagiarism at JMU, I started trying to understand GftG by looking for background information about the program, how it came to be, and the expectations

surrounding its use. I found that the program started on the web in 1996 when it was piloted for General Education courses (Cameron and Evans) and the site retains the general appearance of a 90s era website fifteen years later. Since the site and Go for the Gold was created to update the library resources learning information from the workbook-based method used in the 80s, and one of the reasons cited for this action was to keep up with ever-changing technology – it is difficult to see that same prioritizing given to the site in the present, and it's dated appearance and interface may be barriers for some students to taking Go for the Gold seriously. When searching for information concerning Go for the Gold online, my search returned a website named Enotes.com. This site has a section devoted to James Madison University and a page devoted to University "Slang" local to JMU. In a list of only 24 entries including "D-hall" and "FROGs" I was surprised that Go for the Gold made the cut as important enough for students to write about, and I had to smile when I read the entry,

> "A set of Web-based sections designed by the Carrier Library staff to
>
> introduce students to the services and collections in Carrier Library.
>
> Translation: very boring, but very required for graduation" (Enotes.com).

I found the entry funny not really because it seems to validate the view that students might find Go for the Gold boring (or would at least characterize it as such) but rather the fact that since "Information Ethics" is an important part of the Go for the Gold instruction, the writer here plagiarized the first sentence of their Enotes entry. That first sentence is a very close paraphrase of the "what is go for the gold" statement for instructors. So the writer, presumably a student or alumni of JMU (and I am guessing

here, I could not find out for certain who the author of this page was) deemed GftG worth including, but didn't take the lessons of the instruction with him or her in practice.

As amusing as the student anecdotes are, the question remains, what is the purpose of Go for the Gold, and how does it work as a student resource/instructional tool for discussion of plagiarism at JMU? To look more closely at this issue I researched the history of GftG. The program was designed in response to two issues. The first reason involves support for the (then) relatively new "competency-based General Education program" (Cameron and Evans). The second was the need for a program that could keep up with changes in technology and information better than the previous workbook-based approach used by the library. The program was developed by a team of research librarians and originally included seventeen instructional modules (currently it includes 8). Members of the General Education faculty and the Coordinator of Freshman English were also included as consultants on the creation of GftG. The two primary objectives suggested to the creators which formed the original goals of GftG were stated to require students to,

- "Formulate and conduct an effective information search that includes a variety of reference sources, such as encyclopedias, library catalogs, indexes, bibliographies, statistics sources, government publications, and resources available on the Internet
- Evaluate information sources in terms of accuracy, authority, bias, and relevance" (Cameron and Evans).

Along with these two objectives, the feeling was that GftG was being designed to not only teach students how to use library resources and do research, but also how to use technology. In their article discussing the creation of Go for the Gold, Cameron and Evans also discuss how it was put on the Library page and how the "visible link to Go for the Gold actually served to promote its use across the curriculum." The link to Go for the Gold is still on the front page of the Library Web Site, but it has been literally marginalized, stuck in the left hand column, in the same grey font as the rest of the page and under the heading "Help."

Cameron and Evans further discuss the wonderful feedback they got from many professors in departments not even teaching the General Education courses and how the program was used by faculty across the campus. They also note however, that the initial rate of adoption suffered somewhat because professors had to teach themselves to use the material. Obviously, the discussion in their initial paper is somewhat dated now – fifteen years into the program, as technology and computers have become commonplace on campus and in the library. Cameron and Evans also discuss the future plans for the program – and the need for constant upkeep and maintenance (and the commitment of staff time and resources to that upkeep) to make the best use of the technology.
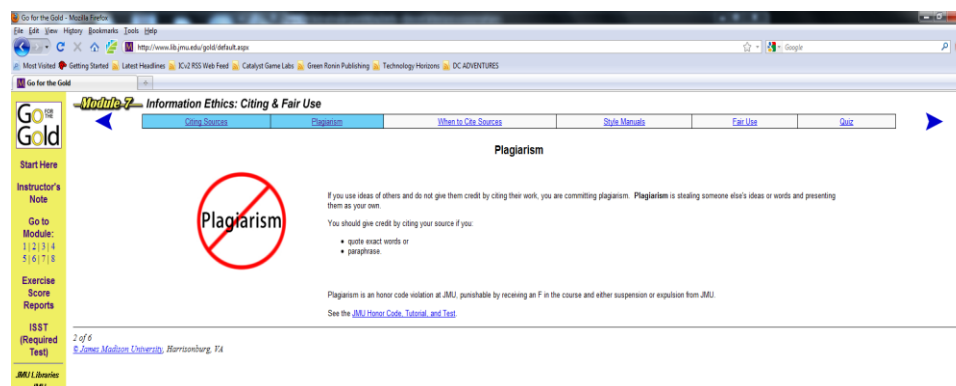

Figure 1. Go for the Gold Module 7

How Go for the Gold interacts with JMU's stance on plagiarism is covered in Module Seven of the instrument. Module Seven is broken down into a series of six pages each detailing in a very foreshortened form, some aspect of proper citation, style, fair use, and plagiarism. As you can see in Figure 1, the discussion of plagiarism on the Go For the Gold site is very short, no more than a few sentences and bullet points, which provide the following definition of plagiarism, "Plagiarism is stealing someone else's ideas or words and presenting them as your own," and little else. This definition is confusing. And it is meant to be a definition, since one of the stated objectives for Module Seven is that students are able to define plagiarism, but this statement is the only definition given on the site. I found it confusing because the definition provided isn't the one used in the Honor Code. Since the Honor Council has set a definition, and that definition is used to determine judicial action and sanction for students, why is that not the definition provided as part of the training given in Go for the Gold? Students are required to complete the program, so why not use it to state the official position of the University? This variety of definitions is something I note across all the resources I cover in this section – and it seems that one immediate recommendation for the University would be to unify all of these documents with the official language of the Honor Council. It is difficult to ascertain from this site exactly what the goals of Go for the Gold are – and how well students relate to the program – but looking further into this module on information ethics, especially the section on citing sources, the information is simplified and gives an essentials-only overview of citation. As with many other important documents, this vital piece of student training provides no room for interpretation, presenting only the strictest case of what constitutes plagiarism, not discussing inadvertent plagiarism at all, and

providing students with only the following mention of the consequences of plagiarizing (from the "Information Ethics" site), "Plagiarism is an honor code violation at JMU, punishable by receiving an F in the course and either suspension or expulsion from JMU." *Go for the Gold's* language in this section presents a view of plagiarism which contains many of the worst elements pointed out by the research. Thinking in Howard's terms, this module shows a definition that does not open the door for students to work their way into an academic discipline but rather bluntly uses criminal, juridical language ("plagiarism is stealing"). It does seem to adhere to a dictionary definition of plagiarism, or one used by an organization such as the MLA (also based on the dictionary definition). Module 7 may also create furthers confusion for students by not matching the other definitions of plagiarism officially used by JMU, such as the Honor Code. One intersection with the research that could become a useful function of Go for the Gold does stem from the necessity for students to complete GftG as a requirement for graduation. If the instrument is improved and updated and the requisite changes made to reconcile the difference in language between GftG and other JMU resources, it is possible that GftG could serve in the capacity of building the "community responsibility" that was discussed by Grossberg as part of the AHA definition of plagiarism. By instilling this community responsibility at the level of first year students – and to do this it would become more important to emphasize Go for the Gold's completion on time for all students (that is, in their first year) – this may also stem some of competing values problems discussed by some authors. Students would be acculturated to become a larger part of the community of academic integrity at JMU and given clearer introductions to

their role in that community, transferring some ownership of standards and expectations to the students in this way.

From here, a link leads to the JMU Honor Code, if students are so inclined to follow it, and students who are genuinely interested in finding out more information about plagiarism issues might do so, leading to their second important exposure to official JMU documents concerning plagiarism, The Honor Code.

Narrative Two: The Honor Code

James Madison University's Honor Code is part of the Student Handbook and discusses actions considered to violate the Code. Even though interpretation is loose for many of the statements included, it is still difficult to get a firm grip on the plagiarism policy of James Madison University.

Several important quotations from the Honor Code stand out,

- Using unauthorized materials or receiving unauthorized assistance during an examination or in connection with any work done for academic credit. Unauthorized materials may include but are not limited to notes, textbooks, previous examinations, exhibits, experiments, papers or other supplementary items.

- Copying information from another student during an examination.

- Collaborating in an unauthorized manner with one or more other students on an examination or any work submitted for academic credit.

Each of these three points could in some way relate to plagiarism. In the first example the unauthorized items could include work that is "fraudulently copied." Copying is specifically called out in the second point here, but since it specifies examinations, it is difficult to apply directly to plagiarism on say, a research paper, or an art project. Unauthorized collaboration is a possibility as well, but still very vague. The reason the vagaries of these points seems important to the discussion is that when plagiarism is not named as a specific offense – and other offenses which seem to be more broadly viewed as forms of academic dishonesty, it is difficult to imagine a student being comfortable defining plagiaristic behaviors. In practice, even though a single definition is hard to agree on, none of the above mentioned acts by students seems to fit the definition JMU provides to students through Go for the Gold or the Writing Center Link Library.

- Using a commercially prepared paper or research project or submitting for academic credit any work completed by someone else.

This point is somewhat more useful for regulating plagiarism on campus. The statement includes the phrase, "submitting for academic credit any work completed by someone else." Unfortunately, this is still very vague, and while it might be enough to make a statement about a written work where a student simply copied another paper, or their research; it is far less useful for discussing plagiarism in any other arena, including creative writing, or visual arts. This point does agree with the majority of researched definitions of plagiarism though, both scholarly and organizational. The outright use of

another's work, whether copying or buying that work, is often seen as the most deliberate form of plagiarism and is named as such by Blum in her three corner model, for example.

As a pressing point, the term plagiarism is never used in the discussion of Honor Code violations, or the judicial process, or sanctions to be levied against offenders. Examining the "Guidelines for Assignment of Sanctions," which is also a part of the Student Handbook, yields no further information. The list of offenses, and the sanctioning process for each as reported by the Student Handbook, still does not list academic dishonesty, academic misconduct, or plagiarism.

Deciding investigate the Honor Code further, I used the Search function of the JMU website and entered the search term, plagiarism. The second search result leads to a page which gave me my first real lead on finding appropriate information concerning the judiciary definitions used for plagiarism at JMU. But the breakthrough came not from a clear search leading to a direct answer. Instead a page that is part of the web presence of a professor, Dr. Kerr, in the History Department, contains a link to the JMU Honor Code. The interesting part of this is that it does not link to the Student Handbook presentation of the Honor Code, but to the JMU Honor Council site. This distinction, while it might seem trivial turned out to be an important discovery. The Honor Code discussion above is culled from the Honor Code – as presented in the student Handbook. The Honor Council site presents a different, more comprehensive Honor Code and presents the first clear definition of plagiarism I have been able to cull from a JMU resource that specifically explains plagiarism as an offense. From the Honor Council site a user can access this "expanded" (and I assume truly official) James Madison University Honor Code. Scrolling through the site you will find, under Section B. The Honor Code, provision 15:

"Committing the act of plagiarism - the copying, writing or presenting as one's own the information, ideas or phrasing of another person without proper acknowledgment of the true source" (Honor Code).

This provision of the Honor Code, listed only on the Honor Council site, is the first and only time I've seen the word plagiarism used in any of the official JMU documents concerning an offense. Two problems immediately come to mind as I view these pages. The first as I've mentioned is that this is a different version of the Honor Code than is presented in the Student Handbook. The two versions available to students do not match and it is worthwhile to consider that if students are going to be instructed by other resources (such as we will see available through the Writing Center links) that ignorance is no defense, then they should have the policies clearly explained. To have a document such as the Student Handbook not even cover Provision 15 is confusing to me as a graduate student and first-time instructor. It might be even more confusing to a first-year student who is accused of plagiarism.

The second important issue is that this definition does not match the definition given to students as part of the syllabus for their First Year Writing Course (for students whose professors were involved in the Common Syllabus Project (CSP) at least) as I mentioned in discussion of the definition presented in the syllabus template given to those of us who were part of the CSP. Notably missing from the language of the Honor Code injunction is any language concerning intentionality. While the language does not specifically call out the issue of "whether you mean to or not" it also does not specify inadvertent plagiarism at all. Does inadvertent plagiarism fall under the Honor Code definition? The initial phrasing, "Committing the act of plagiarism" seems to have a

rhetorical implication that it is a conscious decision, one that a student would be aware of when committing it. This discussion may seem to trivialize the intent of the Honor Code provision, but again, the ultimate goal would be to suggest that the language used to define the offense of plagiarism at JMU be standardized insofar as how it is presented to students. Individual professors may take their own view of how to handle cases of plagiarism with a particular student – and sanctions for plagiarism need not necessarily be so rigid as definitions, but if JMU is going to present a definition that the Honor Council abides by, then the university would be well served to see this definition be a part of official documents which concern themselves with plagiarism – especially those documents meant for student consumption.

Narrative Three: The Student Handbook

Building off the discussion of the Honor Code, Student Handbook is an important link between students and the university when it comes to policies and procedures. While it is idealistic to assume every student reads the handbook religiously the moment it is given to them, the document remains a resource to be consulted should a student have need – such as being accused of being in violation of some JMU policy. Examining the James Madison University (JMU) Student Handbook is instructive when considering issues of academic dishonesty and plagiarism. When I began my investigation into the topic of plagiarism at JMU, looking into the documentation and enforcement issues, I began with the Student Handbook. As a document every student should have available – and which lays out for the student not only their rights as a student, but also their responsibilities.

Another concern to keep in mind is that the Student Handbook is maintained by the Office of Judicial Affairs. Any student in need of guidance for Academic Integrity issues will likely find themselves on this site if they attempt to search for the Handbook or Judicial Affairs. These pages are sources for students and offer a student a chance to search the handbook to find James Madison University's policies about academic dishonesty issues, including plagiarism.

Searching the online handbook using the search term, "plagiarism" does not yield any specific results concerning plagiarism policies – or even a discussion of what JMU considers a plagiarism offense. Initially daunted by this attempt, the next step is to look at the A-Z Index. Attempting to look up plagiarism in the index also yields no result – as the issue of academic dishonesty is not discussed in the Student Handbook in any form. This oversight seems strange in a document designed to outline most aspects of student life and responsibilities at JMU and including other offenses students can run afoul of, such as "projectiles." While I don't mean to take away from the value of these other policies and what they mean to student behavior, it is also important to consider the potential message of this exclusion.

So what does it mean? What is the message to students about how JMU values and prioritizes academic dishonesty and plagiarism? If a student is in need of information on this topic, where does it guide them to go next? Unfortunately, on that last point, the student handbook offers few clues. To the first point though, it becomes increasingly clear that JMU does not make information concerning plagiarism issues easy for students to access. And if students have to search deeply to find the information, how are they being made aware of the policies which are in place? The issue the lack of

clarity in the resources creates is particularly vivid here. A student worried about plagiarism may not feel comfortable talking to their professor or other instructors. If they attempt to research the topic on their own and have the level of difficulty and confusion I encountered, will they know the next correct step to take?

The rhetorical situation of the student handbook is an odd one. As previously mentioned, the handbook, in one sense, constitutes an agreement between JMU and its students. Students are expected to read and adhere to the policies of the handbook, and a professor can reasonably assume that any student sitting in their classroom should be conversant with the information. If you need to know the policies and sanctions for "projectiles," "weapons," or "lewd behavior" the Handbook offers the answers – but remains silent on issues of academic dishonesty and plagiarism.

This silence on the issues of academic dishonesty may not be an invitation, but it seems instructive to students. By simply not discussing the issue, or making it accessible to students to understand their rights, the university stance, and the possible sanctions, they are left to investigate the issue through further means, which for many students will probably mean discussing the issue with other students, or with instructors, who may be equally ill-informed.

Looking into the Student Handbook to find out what sort of judiciary process, charges, or sanctions happen for students involved in a plagiarism hearing was equally frustrating. First, if you start from the top and work your way down, you will see a side bar with listings for "JMU Academics, JMU Policies, JMU Student Life, and JMU Business." "Policies" seems to be the best link to start with, and following the link leads to a listing of options, one of which is Judicial Affairs. Again, this seems like a good

choice, but following this link still leads to nothing about plagiarism (or academic

dishonesty in any form). From the main page of the Student Handbook, there is

announcement of "Judicial Affairs Policy Changes" with a link leading to "all current

policies." Using this link you see the following:

Figure 1. Judicial Affairs Policies

Now, in front of a student seeking help or advice for plagiarism issues you are

looking at a list titled, Judicial Affairs Policies, on a page titled, University Policies and

Judicial Procedure and again, nothing is listed to direct a student to official JMU policy

about academic dishonesty or plagiarism. And again this raises the question; if JMU has

a definite policy concerning plagiarism and it is a judicial issue, why not link that

definition here in a clear manner? The update to the site is dated January 2011 so the university is clearly maintaining this page.

Another option in the sidebar links to the JMU Honor System. For a student concerned with – or simply researching – plagiarism policies at JMU, this seems like a natural next step considering the lack of information included with the Judicial Policies. The information found by following the Honor System link doesn't expand in any way upon the information from the syllabus. If anything, the information here is less complete, not containing even the one line definition of plagiarism mentioned in the syllabus portion. As I have already written about the Honor Code, it seems that the Policies section has little to add to the discussion.

Narrative Four: The Writing Center (Link Library)

Students who are interested in plagiarism issues, or perhaps have been assigned an investigation of plagiarism issues by their professor, (or have been frustrated by other avenues of investigation) may turn to the University Writing Center in an attempt to learn more about plagiarism and the policies of JMU. Looking at the Writing Center's website will yield information about plagiarism, but may do little to dispel student anxiety or adequately explain the policies of James Madison University.

When a student views the Writing Center website the main navigation tool is a sidebar with links. One of the featured links is titled "Student Resources" and seems a likely place to start but yields no information on the topic. Another link, titled "Link Library" connects to a page with links organized topically, and includes links to discussion of the various handbooks and style guides students can use as well as a link

which is titled, "Avoiding Plagiarism" both under the topical category heading, "Citation and Sources."

Accompanying the scholarly conversation of plagiarism are many practical artifacts containing definitions wrought from the available resources and to fill the cultural and practical needs of their organizations. Howard discusses these artifacts such as "college academic codes" and writers' handbooks, mentioning that "these … discussions deserve careful consideration. By definition, handbooks speak for the textual status quo and their representations are concise. They are not the place where cutting-edge theory is put into practice, they are the place where standard practice is explained. Their representations provide essential data for exploring yet another problem of plagiarism…" (Standing 9). I took a look at a few examples of these definition artifacts as a method of seeing definitions of plagiarism as they are enforced and as a prelude to my examination of the textual artifacts available to JMU students as they interact with their university's stance on plagiarism.

To examine how the work of these definitions manifests itself in the practical artifacts of organizations and disciplines I investigated these pieces of writing to see how the definitions being used in organizational practice match the work attempting to evolve these definitions. The importance of these organizational definitions lies in their value as manifestations of beliefs and definitions, distilled into the form of policy. These organizations have, or are given, authority to make these choices of definition and the students writing under these strictures are expected to know and master these organizational standards. The language and impact of these definitions is valuable to examine for its impact on the student in a straightforward fashion in their working

environments. Students, especially early in their academic careers will not be aware of

the work of Lindey, or Howard, or Posner in the field of plagiarism – but the very

standards and expectations that Howard's work discusses these students working to

master is governed directly by these organizational authorities. As resources made

available through the Writing Center Link Library these guides become important

because the tutors and instructors available for helping student writers through the UWC

will be familiar with the way these guides shape a particular type of writing and pass this

information on to the students they work with. The guides in use by a professor will

shape the work a student does for that professor and thus shape the questions that student

will ask when seeking help in the UWC. For the purposes of this work, I looked only at

the MLA and APA guides – as these are commonly used in the school of Writing,

Rhetoric, and Technical Communication and provides some insight into the role these

artifacts play in the discussion of both defining and avoiding plagiarism.

The MLA Handbook, 7th edition, is a standard format and citation guide for some

of the classes (and for graduate students' comprehensive exams) in the JMU Writing,

Rhetoric, and Technical Communication department. My focus is on examining the

situation at JMU and my concern is with students in the early stages of their university

education, so I considered the GWRTC 103 student, and MLA style is a likely format

they will be expected to follow. The *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th*

Edition definition of plagiarism is,

> Derived from the Latin Word *plagiaries* ("kidnapper"), *to plagiarize*
>
> means "to commit literary theft" and "to present as new and original an
>
> idea or product derived from an existing source" (*Merriam-Webster's*

Collegiate Dictionary [11th ed.; 2003; print]). Plagiarism involves two

kinds of wrongs. Using another person's ideas, information, or

expressions without acknowledging that person's work constitutes

intellectual theft. Passing off another person's ideas, information, or

expressions as your own to get a better grade or gain some other

advantage constitutes fraud. Plagiarism is sometimes a moral and ethical

offense rather than a legal one since some instances of plagiarism fall

outside the scope of copyright infringement, a legal offense (52).

Richard Posner takes some issue with this concept of plagiarism as fraud, writing,

"Fraud is a tort – a civil wrong for which damages or other legal relief can be obtained in

a lawsuit – and often a crime. Plagiarism as such is neither…" (40). He goes on to

express a larger view about how plagiarism could be considered some type of fraud, but

also discounts the idea that plagiarism should be a crime that "warrant[s] cranking up the

costly and clumsy machinery of the criminal law" (41).

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA),

another important handbook with authority over publications in its field, the 5th edition of

the APA Manual takes an interesting tone when discussing plagiarism, speaking directly

to the writer. The injunction against plagiarism begins, "Psychologists do not claim the

words and ideas of another as their own; they give credit where credit is due" and

instructs the writer to use quotation marks. The writer is further told that "each time you

paraphrase another author, you will need to credit the source in the text" (349). The

values of the field are brought into the discussion though, stated as, "Given the free

exchange of ideas, which is very important to the health of psychology, an author may

not know where an idea … originated. If the author does know, however, the author should acknowledge the source; this includes personal communications" (349-50). The introduction of the values of the discipline seems like a departure from the MLA Handbook and the tone – as of speaking to a professional in the field rather than presenting a catalogue of guidelines aims at the task of making the reader/user of the manual, part of the group. Even as an outsider to the discipline, I found the language inviting and was left feeling like I'd been introduced to a part of the discipline.

In these definitions two ideas continue to appear – and seem indicative of the typical rhetoric concerning plagiarism. The first is the continued use of the term "fraud" and the second is the implication that plagiarism is an intentional act, involving "dishonesty." The danger in these definitions, of course, remains centered on the notion of intentional action. If no intent to deceive or no knowledge of that deceit exists, then what offense is committed? An experienced and well-educated student, prepared with the proper tools may not be forgiven for breaking citation requirements or failing to properly format the ideas of others, but for first-year writing students with little in the way of resources, these points become more telling.

On the surface, each of these definitions may seem relatively complete, defining specific types of actions and what those actions mean. And their usage of actions and behaviors as a definition fits with the scholarly conversation which continues to evolve and impact these statements. Unfortunately, the definitions also suffers from being less forthcoming about how to draw a line concerning the different types of plagiarism – is a case of inadvertent plagiarism by a freshman writing student worthy of the same punishment as a deliberate act on the part of a graduate student? Should the two offenses

be treated equally? Also, what measures are in place to determine the difference? Assuming the strictest stance, the most concise language, seems to imply that every case should be treated equally – whether this is actually done in practice or not. Keeping these thoughts in mind, I turned my attention to the "Avoiding Plagiarism" link to examine what JMU's Writing Center offered as the university narrative – one among many – for students to consider.

The "Avoiding Plagiarism" link leads to a page titled "Plagiarism." This page consists of four plagiarism related links and a short introductory paragraph that could be a student's first introduction to the issues of plagiarism at James Madison University. Something to remember when considering this resource is the simple fact that, except for a very specific mention in the Honor Council code and a very dated mention that a student is exposed to during Go for the Gold, this is the only other direct mention of plagiarism – by name, as a problem – to be found when a student is searching for this information at JMU. The paragraph is interesting in the way it does not alleviate student anxiety, lists specific risky behavior, and yet still fails to define plagiarism except through the lens, again, of taking a strictest possible stance and bringing to light that intention (or at least, failure to properly master citation conventions) does not change the act of plagiarism.

The paragraph, in its entirety states,

> "Both students and professional writers should be concerned about plagiarism. Although many writers think that plagiarism only involves purposely using someone else's words as one's own, plagiarism can also

result from missing punctuation, improper citation formats, and careless paraphrasing" (UWC).

But a student who reads this still has further resources to access on this page to research the question further, right? Well, yes and no. Following the links on this "Plagiarism" page leads to an assortment of resources but only one is directly related to the policies and culture of JMU. The "Overview" links to a plagiarism page provided by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Writing Center. The "Tutorial about how to avoid plagiarism" leads a student to a page provided by the University of Maryland University College which is a 30-minute self-study course. The "Strategies for preventing plagiarism" link leads to a page created by Duke University Libraries entitled, "Warning Signs and Prevention." Three links to plagiarism resources, all text-heavy or time-consuming and none of them are official James Madison University discussions of plagiarism. In fact, they are provided by three other universities and lack even one unified vision of how to deal with plagiarism issues.

The first link, to the UNC Writing Center pages, starts out by defining plagiarism as, "the deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise" (UNC Writing Center). This definition uses wording such as "deliberate" and "reckless" and states specifically that the offense of plagiarism includes words, thoughts and ideas – but it also stipulates that the issue is when these are represented as "one's own." While it is relatively easy to parse the meaning of deliberate in this definition it is more problematic to work with the word reckless. Does reckless mean inadvertent or unintentional plagiarism? What did the university want a student to

take away from the word reckless when reading the definition? And if a student commits

inadvertent plagiarism – due to ignorance or error – does that constitute a reckless act?

Following up on this, I contacted the Office of the Dean of Students at UNC and asked

about the inclusion of the word reckless. Dean Brown, who spoke with me about the

choice of wording referred me to the dictionary definition of reckless, "marked by lack of

proper caution: careless of consequences" (Miriam Webster Online). Specifically, his

response to my questions explained that ignorance of policy or proper citation

style/academic requirements is no defense. Interpreting this statement and the gist of our

brief conversation about the choice of the word reckless based on the dictionary

definition, it seems as if the burden is very much on the student to ask questions and be

aware of the issues. I would like to have delved deeper into asking how plagiarism issues

are referenced and taught at UNC campuses, but my focus is on the experience of a

student at James Madison University. Offering the UNC statements to JMU students may

not relate directly to the definition provided by JMU's Honor Council, but the focus of

the UNC advice to students – and the burden on students to be aware of writing

transgressions – again, seems a worthwhile resource.

     The UNC page goes on to discuss the reasons your professors will ask you to cite

sources and discusses some possible common assignments students will encounter. Then

the writing moves on to discuss the idea of common knowledge. The common

knowledge idea is often discussed in writing about research but I've rarely seen it

referenced in specific discussion of plagiarism. I found the advice offered in this section

somewhat problematic for the issue of plagiarism though – and possibly misleading to a

student. The site offers the following advice about common knowledge,

"In order to decide if the material you want to use in your paper constitutes "common knowledge," you may find it helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- Did I know this information before I took this course?

- Did this information/idea come from my own brain?

If you answer "no" to either or both of these questions, then the information is not "common knowledge" to you" (UNC Writing Center).

This advice may seem straightforward and yet it leaves a lot of room for misinterpretation. I found myself questioning the idea of "did I know this information before I took this course?" While I cannot predict the minds of every student who reads this, it is my own experience that younger students, adjusting to the academic writing style required by even the GWRTC 103 course at JMU will confuse opinions and reliable facts about their writing subjects. A student may not question their own ideas sufficiently and may take what they "know" to be authoritative on a subject. Some students will have learned information outside of the classroom that may not seem academic to them, but then when they write about it in an assignment; they may assume that they did "know information from before the course." This may become problematic when linked to the second point – instead of seeing them as separate tests of knowledge, the two could actually work together to thwart the original intent of the statements. What does "did this information come from my own brain" mean? A student may assume that they did, indeed know something from outside the classroom and if they learned it on their own, outside of school, and they don't remember the when or how of learning it, then it may indeed seem to come from their own brain but still not be common knowledge. The

immediate cases that came to mind were two of my own students who wanted to write about topics very important to them, but failed to properly cite in multiple drafts of their research work. One of the students was writing about poaching and okapis. The other wrote about the dangers of High Fructose Corn Syrup. Both had extensive previous knowledge of their topics, gained through long reading or family discussions, and both assumed that their readers knew just as much as they did when writing. Disentangling the issues of how they came to the knowledge they possessed, how to properly present it to a new audience, and why citation of sources for the information they thought of as "common knowledge" was necessary became the primary obstacle these two students faced when attempting to properly source and cite their work. In both cases, my discussions with these students seem to bear out the idea that they would have answered "yes" to both of the above questions, until guided to think much more carefully about their assumed knowledge.

One piece of advice repeated throughout the UNC Writing Center document is the idea that students should carefully read the assignments given to them by instructors – and to make sure they are clear on what is expected, in terms of type and number of sources used, what citation style the professor expects them to work in, and other pertinent details. This advice reinforces the idea – for both students and professors – that the assignment sheet itself is an important document in the student's decision-making process and students should be sure to clear up any uncertainties by asking questions to assist in making the best choices while writing.

Overall, using the UNC plagiarism site certainly doesn't seem detrimental to JMU students as a resource to improve understanding, but does continue to ask the question,

why use another university's pages and writing at all? Why not develop resources central

to JMU's missions and goals (such as Community-focus and "Be the Change") that tie

issues of plagiarism and academic dishonesty more closely to JMU's values?

Moving on from the UNC site and following the next link on the JMU UWC site

titled, "Tutorial about how to avoid plagiarism" leads to the University of Maryland

University College Effective Writing Center's (EWC) "How to Avoid Plagiarism"

tutorial. This is a self-guided training module designed to teach a student pertinent ideas

about proper citation in quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing material in academic

writing.

The introductory material just before a user starts the module details two ideas

about why plagiarism is important, "Because you want to do your best work and you

want it to be your work" and "Because professors care about it" (EWC of UMUC).

These two areas are further explained in student-centric language, conveying such ideas

as **"**Teachers are concerned about plagiarism not because they are mean-spirited or

suspicious but because they are responsible for supporting honest, responsible

scholarship" and after some brief mention of the consequences of being caught

plagiarizing, "[F]or a university student, avoiding plagiarism is serious business" (EWC

of UMUC). The section closes with a small paragraph entitled "Tip" and is again

speaking directly to students,

"Ironically, some honest and hardworking students plagiarize out

of ignorance. They don't know proper citation and referencing procedures.

Whether or not a student intends plagiarism is not a defense, however,

when plagiarism happens. Therefore, you cannot expect your teacher to

accept the claim of not intending to commit plagiarism as an excuse for

the act" (EWC of UMUC).

And this quote reinforces the repetition of the idea that ignorance is no defense. Students

are expected to arm themselves with this knowledge and to learn the standards and styles

of the writing they are doing even if such learning is not a direct part of the curriculum.

The UMUC site though is a solid tutorial overview of the issues though and will

be useful to any student seeking answers about writing – though the training module style

and the statement of a 30 minute potential length of the module may turn some users

away, if they are looking for a more direct guidebook style explanation of the topics

under review. The module is offered in two forms, HTML only or a Flash version. This

distinction is important because it offers access to users with differing levels of

technology and comfort with technology instead of assuming one answer for the student

audience. The two versions differ little in content, though the Flash presentation also

engages the student with graphics and music not present in the HTML only version. The

tutorial presents its examples in APA style (stated as being the citation style most used in

UMUC courses). This section does reference the other styles students are likely to

encounter and offers a link that creates a pop-up window for students to "Learn more

about Styles" (EWC of UMUC). The use of small pop-up windows instead of links to

outside resources keeps students inside the tutorial which seems a solid choice for the

audience and purpose of the site.

Once the tutorial proper is started, students are presented with a series of screens

detailing specific issues of managing source materials with the focus on proper methods

of quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing and then are presented with a series of eight

guidelines to follow in their work. The guidelines are introduced with simple quiz questions.

The usefulness of these guidelines should not be overlooked, as they do provide students with practical guidance on the proper behaviors and along with testing the knowledge a student brings into the tutorial, they reinforce previous lessons from the tutorial. This is also true of the Post-Test which closes out the Tutorial and is a summative assessment of the material covered.

The Tutorial is a learning experience for students – as I mentioned before, the training module nature of the tutorial sets up different user expectations than, say, a series of webpages offering the information without guidance. The layout provides a clear progression of topical information which is formatively assessed while reviewing the eight Guidelines. The final section, a Post-Test, is a summative capstone to the tutorial requiring 100% correct to pass and providing a certificate upon meeting that mark. The test items are practical situations, showing an original text of a source, how that source is used in a student's writing, and then multiple choice options covering the possible errors the student made in using the material. These examples ground the reality of the situations and offer students examples they can relate to as they work through the test, perhaps even allowing them to recognize their own strategies and issues as they work. When you finish the test (which I only got an 87.5% on the first time through) and you do not get a 100% passing score, the test offers the specific sections of the tutorial for you to review before taking the test again. Overall, it is a well-made, effective tool for communicating expectations to students in a practical method. This test sets up an

interesting standard to compare the final link for students on the JMU Writing Center's site.

The remaining UWC link is titled "Take this quiz to find out if you understand plagiarism" and although the only link to a genuine James Madison University resource, it is perhaps the worst offender of all in terms of helping students reach an understanding of plagiarism and alleviating fear caused by plagiarism concerns. The quiz is nine questions long and presents scenarios with multiple choice answers. As a graduate student in a writing-intensive program, I achieved a 78% when I took the quiz – and, anecdotally, when the quiz was given to a class of graduate students who were allowed to work collaboratively on the answers, the class still received a 78% on the quiz. Five graduate students, working together to decide answers to a quiz that is the only James Madison University resource provided concerning plagiarism and the level of understanding is a C+? The grade is somewhat misleading though, as the scenarios presented in the quiz are not clear cut cases and the graduate students taking the quiz complicated each one with questions and debate before answering. Again, this is merely anecdotal, but the questioning reveals, in a limited fashion the type of questioning a student might go through when making decisions which could lead to a charge of plagiarism – or deciding to work poorly to avoid that accusation. The question also left at least one student more anxious after taking the quiz than before.

Presumably it seems safe to assume that since the quiz was devised by someone at JMU as a test for JMU students, that the questions and answers would reflect the policies and say something about the institutional stance JMU (as an academic culture) takes concerning plagiarism. To that end, and with the complicating questions of graduate

students in mind, I want to examine the ideas brought up by the test more closely through

analysis of the quiz itself.

As previously mentioned concerning the "Go For the Gold" web presence, the

presentation here is lacking. As a piece of organizational communication, when you

click the link to start the quiz you are presented with the following screen:

Figure 3. UWC Plagiarism Quiz

The screen is blank of all other information or enticement, just a tiny .jpg image, a title,

and a link. Practically speaking, the student doesn't need more than this, but the low

design standards do make a statement about the priority of this document to the university

in terms of attention and resources. Once you follow the link, you begin the quiz. Please

note that the quiz, while it always uses the same questions does not always have the

questions appear in the same order – so my numbering below is for organizational sake

only. Also, I will not explore all nine questions, as some of the issues they raise are very

similar or redundant. Viewing the quiz does create some immediate comparisons to the

Maryland University tutorial though. With the tutorial from UMUC available from the

same set of links, why create a summative quiz as a JMU resource, when the quiz is

testing knowledge presumably gathered from the resources of other universities? Further,

the UMUC quiz and its accompanying tutorial seem to have a much larger allocation of

time and other resources put into creating the resource, again leading to an unfavorable

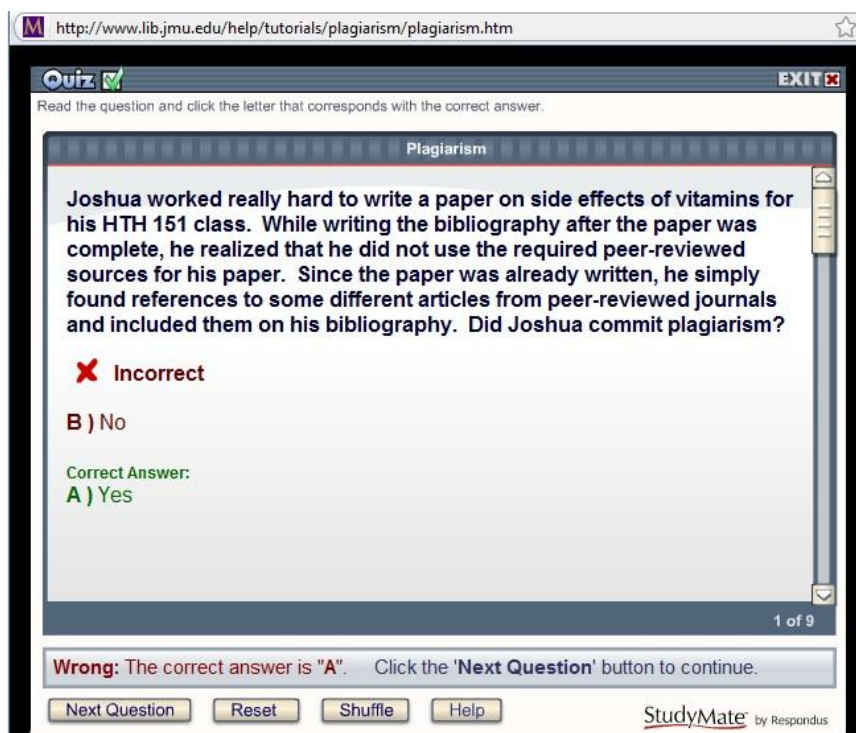comparison to JMU's sole internal offering.

Question One

Figure 4. UWC Plagiarism Quiz Question 1

As you look at the first question, the first thing I noted was the answers. Students

only have two choices, "Yes" or "No." But even though this seems to be a fairly

straightforward case of dishonesty – the student is falsifying their work by including

sources that are unreferenced – but how is it plagiarism? I might be able to provide a

complex answer from my research but considering the imaginary student sitting in front

of the quiz, it is difficult to see that they are gaining much from the answer box telling

them they are wrong if they say "No" without providing any further guidance. The

student is being told not to do a certain action – and is given one scenario of what that

action might be, but if they don't know the correct answer, this doesn't provide any

further guidance to shape that student toward understanding. It seems difficult, in this case, to understand why the behavior is so bad. Certainly the issue of dishonesty is at play, but a student might ask, "So what? Who does it hurt?" And when considered in the light of deadlines and competition for grades, explaining the reasoning why the university (or a professor) might care about such an infraction seems important to acculturating the student into better academic behavior.

This question links up with another area of concern that comes up in plagiarism reading concerning the idea that the student is failing themselves. That is to say, the student is undermining the goals of their education and not improving their own learning by failing to properly research, read, and learn the important information.

Question 2
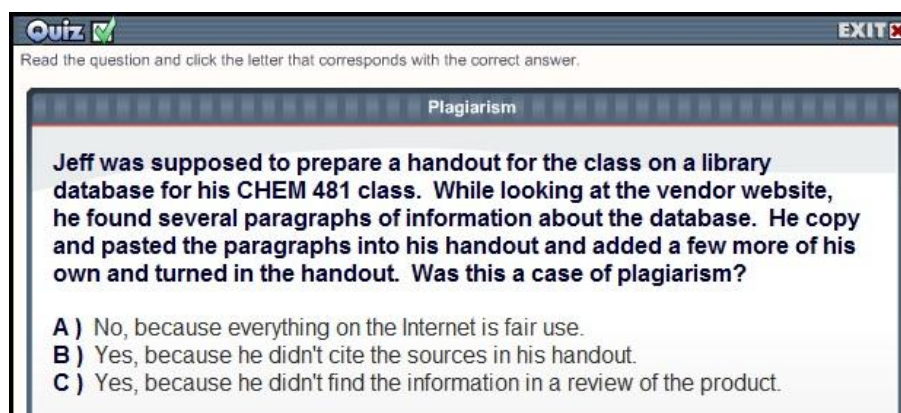
Figure 5. UWC Plagiarism Quiz Question 2

Question 2 is more straightforward, with a student cut-and-pasting another piece of writing directly into their own writing. The source is not used just for inspiration or discovery, but used directly without citation or credit. This question also raises the spectre of the Internet as "fair use." This revelation that everything on the Internet is not open to lifting may be surprising to some students, and it is a worthwhile addition to the choices for answering this question.

Question 3

Quiz ☑   EXIT ✖

Read the question and click the letter that corresponds with the correct answer.
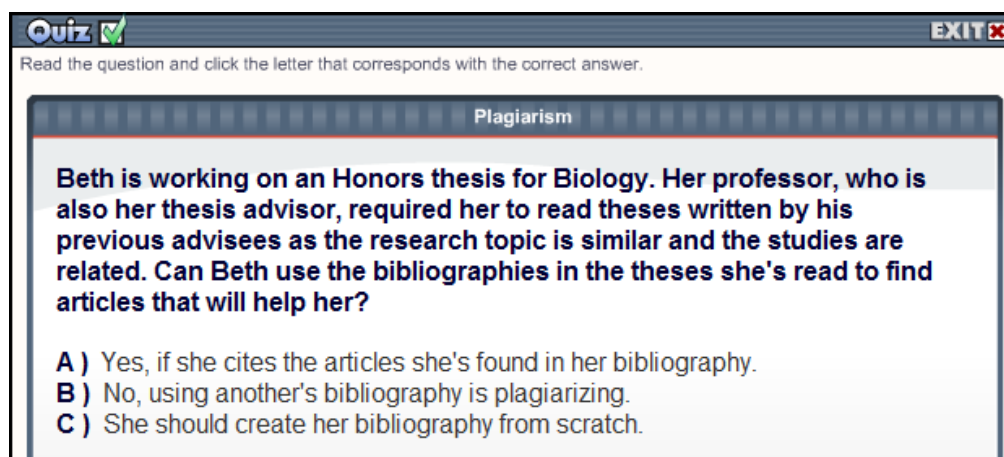
Plagiarism

Beth is working on an Honors thesis for Biology. Her professor, who is also her thesis advisor, required her to read theses written by his previous advisees as the research topic is similar and the studies are related. Can Beth use the bibliographies in the theses she's read to find articles that will help her?

A) Yes, if she cites the articles she's found in her bibliography.
B) No, using another's bibliography is plagiarizing.
C) She should create her bibliography from scratch.

Figure 6. UWC Plagiarism Quiz Question 3

A more problematic question appears with Question 3. Even though to me the answer is clear; of course she can use the bibliographies to track down additional sources – as long as she properly cites the sources she uses – this can be further complicated. Is she doing original research if she uses the bibliographies? Is she profiting (in terms of time spent, quality of research, or potentially better grades) by using the work of another student? Since the other student's work leads to her discoveries, does she need to then credit the other bibliographer in any way? This question opens up possibilities that professors may need to discuss with their students concerning research and proper use of resources. If the answer is straightforward, why include such a scenario in the quiz? What were the designers of the quiz considering when writing this question – what feedback did they have at their disposal telling them this was an issue worth including when you only have nine questions to work with? Again, I propose that this question and its answer points students into certain behaviors by validating them, while still not providing any further information or feedback which might direct a student to understand why this is different, culturally speaking, from the scenario presented in question one.

The two situations are not the same, but are set up in a similar fashion and have similar potential outcomes. Another important point to consider with Question 3 is the value of the professor providing these former papers to a student in the beginning stages of working on the same assignment. One issue often discussed concerning student cheating is centered on the role of the assignment in the decision making of the student. Going beyond the actual question presented here, another important consideration is the professor's decision and intent in giving these old assignments to the current student.
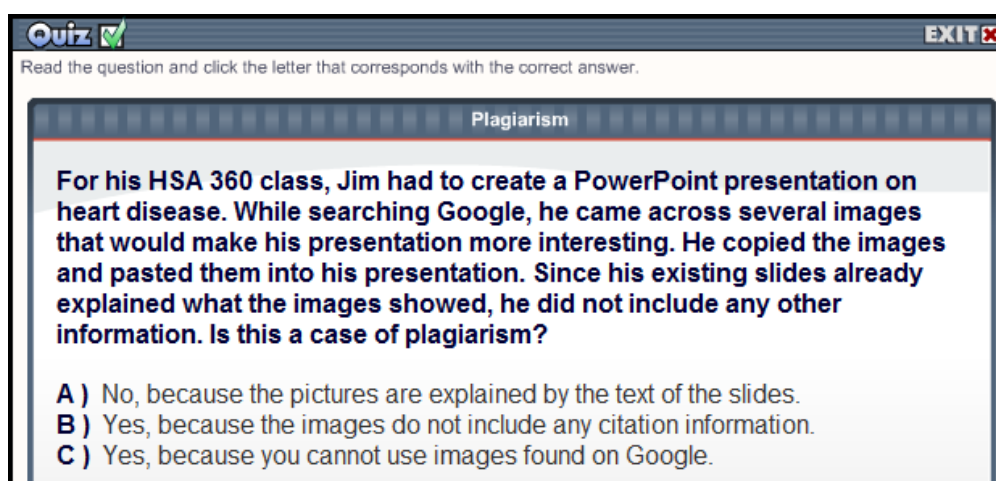
Question 4

Figure 7. UWC Plagiarism Quiz Question 4

This question, while also seeming straightforward in its answer (B, "because the images do not include any citation information") interacts with the definitions of plagiarism in interesting ways. If plagiarism includes intent – and many definitions include intent as part of the crime of plagiarism – then what if the student did not intend to deceive? The student is not claiming, necessarily, to have created these images – and may have acquired them through a service that provides images that are free to use, may not require attribution, and are open to claim. It would be ethically appropriate to include some information concerning the source of the images to eliminate confusion, but

ultimately, the student is using the images to provide visual stimulus to a presentation, not to represent them as their own work.

Additionally, this idea connects to the work of Howard when she writes about the dangers of assuming all types of plagiarism fit under one heading. This student is not in the same territory as a student who is copying and pasting paragraphs of theory or analysis, or taking a whole paper. Even the question mentions that other slides in the presentation explain the information and since the issue is not brought up, then I assume that the student wrote their own explanations. This seems to me, as it might now to Howard, to be a teachable moment – asking the student where they found the images they used and asking why they didn't document that as part of the presentation. Further still, this is also a good lead in to explain a function of citation in ethos. The lack of citation on the images could lead to questions about the rest of the presentation – that is, if you don't cite the image sources, then perhaps you've neglected to cite other important information. And all of this can be done without resorting to accusations of plagiarism or involving the Honor Council, even informally. Under the local standard of taking the strictest stance, which is again what the answers on this test imply to me as a reader, then this student deserves a charge of plagiarism and possibly a failing grade on this assignment. This is also an area where plagiarism and copyright can be conflated and come into conflict. Even if a student cites where the images came from, does that give the student "fair use" to use them, and what should professors discuss with their students in such a situation? Concerns about copyright go beyond the scope of this paper's intent but it still bears mentioning how the two issues, while not the same, have similarities and can converge/overlap in academic discussion. Howard references this issue as she begins

to discuss modern plagiarism policies and warns against the two ideas intermingling and acknowledges that "one way, in fact, that injunctions against plagiarism gain their power is by an apparent identity with copyright" (Howard, *Standing…* 97). She is warning against this though because the discourse of plagiarism works inside the community and "supporting the principles of the academy" (98). Conflating the issue with copyright makes it more difficult for the cultural shifts in the academy to also influence plagiarism policy (98).

Rebecca Moore Howard also brings up a notion that professors feel a similar pressure when presenting to their classes – the idea that when they "lecture to their classes, they, too, are plagiarists" (*Standing… 26).* And this anxiety comes from the nature of the lecture, that when a professor is lecturing they "synthesize unattributed sources in such a way that the students assume they are hearing the lecturer's own ideas" (26). As a first-time instructor in a university classroom I felt this pressure far more keenly than in previous work as a Middle School teacher. I found myself often stumbling in a discussion with students when I would go back to an idea and clarify to them where it came from. Reflectively, I did not recognize this behavior until encountering it in Howard's text.

As you examined some of the quiz questions I discuss here – or if you chose to take the JMU quiz yourself, consider that the JMU quiz is a summative instrument, testing total knowledge, and involves no explanation of the issues stated, ambiguous issues not as closely related to the practical work of the classroom, no follow-up answers to the questions when a student gets one wrong, and finally, the JMU quiz is not practically linked to any function. It doesn't even produce a token certificate for students

upon completion. It doesn't set a standard for completion as well, simply offering a grade at the end – something out of nine. So a student who takes this quiz and receives a 78% (as my graduate colleagues and I did) has little external motivation to pursue the matter further – and when they do so, will not be looking at JMU resources to educate themselves.

Implications and Further Thinking

In this thesis, I have covered a lot of information – from examining the still evolving definitions used to navigate plagiarism in discussion and policy to focusing on specific artifacts of my own university, JMU – and in doing so, discovered that many questions are being asked, many changes are being suggested and made, but it seems as if the rhetoric surrounding plagiarism discussions is still working toward developing a new narrative. The WPA statement shows evidence that the narrative is changing – official bodies are developing statements which offer different guidelines and set different strictures for what should be considered plagiarism in a university setting – particularly when dealing with student plagiarism. The strictest stance policies of some universities and the very deliberateness of those stances still speak to the current narrative's power. And there is still uncertainty and a desire for better definitions. I have internalized these definitions as I've worked with all of this information, processed the work of these different authors across disciplines and university cultures. But the question remains – I started this examination even as I began my first work as an instructor of writing students – and what does all this mean for me, in that role, and for other JMU professors navigating the different narratives JMU seems to offer to students?

My examination of the variety of sometimes confusing narratives JMU provides its students with regard to plagiarism has given me a chance to discover how difficult the questions surrounding plagiarism remain. As a first time instructor, I asked my students informal questions and opened up discussion concerning the documents I've introduced here in an attempt to understand better myself how I could help them navigate their issues with research and plagiarism. I started, as I did in my research, with Go for the Gold. I

showed this to my students and let them talk about it. Only a few students in my Spring

Semester GWRTC 103 course had already encountered Go For the Gold, but one student

said something that stuck with me, commenting, "It looks like a webpage somebody's

mom made back in 1995." And probing that statement a little further I realized that one

issue students had with plagiarism and research is a lack of understanding of the

seriousness of their own work and what an accusation of plagiarism could mean to them.

My students were, in the majority, eager and prepared for the challenges of college – but

still ignorant in many ways about the differences in the work they were being asked to do

as first-year college students from that asked of high school seniors. They were not, yet,

a part of the culture of JMU – as an institution of academic learning. And this might be

the best lesson I took from all of this. With regard to cultural academic issues, my own

answer, as a writing instructor, came from working with students to give them a better

understanding of the importance of their own work – and why the conventions, styles,

and values they were asked to adhere to and incorporate in the classroom and in their own

work were important, not only to their professors, but to improve their writing – and their

own ethos as academics. I have looked at the research, read the evolving discussion

surrounding the questions of student plagiarism, and examined the resources offered to

JMU students to understand how plagiarism is defined and understood at my university.

This information and analysis has helped me to better phrase the questions I have, and the

suggestions I make in the writing to JMU as a university seemingly struggling with their

plagiarism identity.

Ultimately, I don't believe – from my research – that anyone has the whole

answer yet. Different academic cultures may never agree to one narrative view of the

issue. As a beginning instructor though, I think Howard's idea that standards are local is one of the most important issues to consider. JMU has an academic culture – and conflicting (or just confusing) narratives, such as those provided to students through the resources I've examined – present a conflicting narrative of that culture, at least concerning plagiarism. A more direct approach, unifying the different narratives to all agree with the Honor Council language would be one place to start and examining the language JMU chooses is a perfect opportunity to review some of the changing narratives and possibly evolve the university culture in new directions extending from basic policy to sanctions for offenders. The implications for individual instructors echo the larger questions the administrative bodies of the university need to ask – to shape policy that is more cohesive and clear for those instructors and for students.

One implication for the future of policy-making and student education in academic dishonesty issues, especially plagiarism, is brought forth when considering a pedagogical strategy such as working with student patchwriting. If students are allowed to engage in this process, allowed to explore a new discourse community by working with the words of other writers, what dangers could this present to the faculty involved, and to the students themselves? Again, Rebecca Moore Howard provides an interesting analysis of this problem, which is a good place to start.

> "The regulatory fiction of the autonomous author continues to prevail in academic prohibitions of plagiarism. Institutions' uniformly juridical policies against plagiarism restrict the extent to which pedagogy can respond to revised cultural representations of authorship. Teachers who follow the advice of Drum, Howard, Hull and Rose, Kantz,

McCormick, and Whitaker might find themselves professionally

compromised if their institutions' regulations provided only for juridical

responses. Teachers may therefore be forced into counter-pedagogical

responses. (Plagiarisms 797).

As previously mentioned, categorizing student plagiarism as an ethical failure or

moral offense is a common practice, and as pointed out by Ogilivie and Stewart, "the

only sanction threats that emerged to significantly affect students' decisions to engage in

academic misconduct were internally imposed punishments. Students reporting the

highest likelihood of experiencing shame as a result of engaging in misconduct reported

the lowest frequencies of involvement in misconduct" (134).

Despite this rhetorical classification of student misconduct – and the perceived

risk that unethical behavior in school will carry over into unethical behavior in later work

– the writer is punished on the basis of "formalist terms" as Howard writes, and further

"policies may even specifically exclude the writer's intentions, stipulating that plagiarism

is plagiarism even if the writer is ignorant of its prohibition" (Howard, Plagiarisms…

797). This is certainly the case with JMU's policy – stated in the strictest terms it does

specifically include the phrasing "whether you mean to or not."

With a perception that plagiarism is on the rise, and self-reporting rates from

students ranging between 40 to 80 percent, why is plagiarism education still a

(seemingly) marginal issue in the University setting, something students are expected to

understand, but that no one really wants to talk about? Howard's discussion of the

problem from the academic perspective offers some insight as when discussing her

attempts to change the definitions, returning to the idea of plagiarism as a field lacking in strong theoretical work,

> "Plagiarism is an undertheorized field, commonly regarded as a distasteful, instrumental, necessary function of pedagogy, unrelated to theory. Until very recently, scholarly discussion of plagiarism assumed it to be a natural (though loathsome) category, not a constructed one; hence, these discussions did not undertake causal and evaluative arguments about the construction of plagiarism and the cultural work that this construction performs" (xviii-xix).

This discussion of the issue in terms of the "cultural work" is intriguing considered in the light of trying to build effective policies surrounding plagiarism which go beyond simple "strictest definition" punishment, but also include higher stakes than informal sanctions and a single failing grade. Specifically, it is interesting to consider the "distasteful" nature of plagiarism and how it is an area that is not only a blight on the record of the offender, but also reflects back onto policy-makers and writers wishing to discuss the issue. So how can instructors and administrators move on to a more useful and educationally helpful definition of plagiarism and policy for enforcement and sanction? I want to end with an examination of an additional JMU document – looking at the penalties and sanctions assigned under the Honor Code and how the interaction of their hearing and sanction process operates. To close here, with some final discussion of sanctions, at JMU and with the commentary of my research, is important to me – I don't have all the answers, honestly, in nearly 100 pages I may have mostly raised more questions – but I know now, as a writing instructor, how I will tackle these issues in the

future and as I look forward to the next phase of my education, focusing on the

administrative work of a university – it is important to me to see how all of the research

and theory become interwoven into policies which then shape the lives of the members of

the JMU community.

Once a student is accused of an offense of academic dishonesty under the JMU

Honor Code – including plagiarism – it is investigated and a hearing determines the

outcome. Once the hearing process is finished and turns to assigning penalties JMU has

several distinctions of penalties to consider. It is instructive to examine JMU's penalties

– and the consideration that these penalties are for first-time offenders. As listed in

Section G. of the Honor Council policies, the Penalties are:

G. Penalties

One of the following penalties will be assessed for a student's first honor

violation:

1. Reduced or failing grade on the most applicable area of student

evaluation in the course (e.g., an assignment, an examination, class

participation, etc.);

2. Reduced or failing grade in the course;

3. Failing grade in the course. For a first violation, the hearing panel has

the option to assign either an "F" or an "F with a transcript notation" as a

penalty. If the "F with a transcript notation" option is assigned as a

penalty, the registrar will adjust the student's transcript to contain an "F"

and a statement that the "F" is due to an Honor Code violation. The

transcript notation shall remain on the official university transcript for one

year from the date the student graduates or completion of the Site Experience administered by the Office of Judicial Affairs, which ever should occur first in time.

4. Failing grade with a transcript notation in the course and suspension for the fall or spring semester including the preceding or following summer term upon conclusion of the final disposition of the matter. A student may not receive credit for work taken at another institution during this period of suspension. A hearing body may impose suspension for a student's first violation if it finds that the student intentionally tried to obtain an academic advantage for him/herself or another student. The transcript notation shall remain on the official university transcript for one year from the date the student graduates or completion of the Site Experience administered by the Office of Judicial Affairs, which ever should occur first in time.

5. "Failing grade with a transcript notation" in the course and expulsion from the university; a hearing body may impose expulsion for a student's first or second violation if it finds (i) the student intentionally tried to obtain an academic advantage for him/herself or another student, and (ii) the violation involved aggravated circumstances (e.g., violation of another university policy in conjunction with the honor violation). The transcript notation shall remain on the official university transcript permanently in the case of expulsion.

The maximum penalty that may be assessed under Part D (i.e., the penalty designated by the faculty or staff member is agreed to by the student) is "F" in the course.

If an "F" or "F with a transcript notation" in the course is assessed for an honor violation, the student will not be permitted to retake that course on a "repeat/forgiveness" basis.

Should this not be a student's first offense, the penalties change:

If a student commits more than one honor code violation, the informal resolution process is not an option. The following minimum penalties will apply: the minimum penalty for a second violation will be "F with a transcript notation" in the course and suspension for a semester. The minimum penalty for a third violation will be "F with a transcript notation" in the course and expulsion.

6. Values in Action Workshop: The option to require the student to attend the Values in Action Workshop facilitated in conjunction with the Office of Judicial Affairs is available for both formal and informal resolutions. This penalty should only be assigned in addition to another appropriate penalty unless the violation occurred outside of an enrolled class or an appropriate penalty is unavailable. This penalty is assigned based on the judgment of the professor if it is an informal violation or the judgment of the hearing board if it is a formal violation that the student will benefit from the class. If the Values in Action Workshop does not seem

appropriate for the student then it should not be assigned. This penalty can
only be imposed once per student.

The JMU sanctions do offer a graded scaled of responses, ranging from failing
grades to values workshops. The issue of first offense is also addressed but judgments of
intent, or the nature of the offense, beyond being lumped under academic dishonesty, is
not mentioned. And the prospect of the Values in Action workshop seems to occupy a
strange area, being offered only under certain conditions and then only if the judgment is
that the student will find it helpful/appropriate to their needs. Ultimately, the values
training and transcript notations might bring up an idea which seems to arise in academic
discussions – such as concerning research, theory vs. practice, and also in plagiarism and
academic dishonesty issues, is the thought that students are not really interested in being
completely indoctrinated into the cultural values of the university community. Students
often see the university as a stepping stone to the next part of their lives, often their
careers. This point is addressed by Julianne East, who is an Instructor and Advisor in
Academic Language at La Trobe University – currently focusing her research on
plagiarism and academic integrity – in her discussion of plagiarism as a moral issue,
writing:

> "On the other hand, those who do not have an interest in staying
> within an organisation are unlikely to take its standards to heart and are
> more likely to perceive those standards as impositions. Most students see
> their benefits as being beyond the university and generally want to
> graduate from university and move on.

Unsurprisingly, plagiarism, which is a breach of academic

standards, is more affronting to lecturers than it is to their students" (71).

It bears noting here that as East develops her discussion of plagiarism as a

problem of morality, she is also arguing against the current standards for defining

plagiarism as moral breakdown. This is especially true of cases of plagiarism involving

failure to use the proper citation conventions, "Universities not only penalize students,

who rank low in the hierarchy, for ignorance of norms, they can also brand them as

lacking moral standards" and also, "The problem becomes even more complicated if

ignorance of prevailing practice is understood as being poor moral development" (East

75). Thomas Mallon, writing about punishments in his book, *Stolen Words*, is disdainful

of the moral nature of punishments offered over the expectation that shame will make a

difference writing about how students who are suspended may simply see it as a vacation,

with little shame to show upon their return and goes on to mention that most judgments

end a single failing grade (98). And as Blum mentions when attempting to define

plagiarism, moral arguments can be hard to make important to students who are not

embracing the culture of their university, because they may prioritize other moral and

ethical imperatives.

Returning to East's view of punishing those who rank lower, I see this concept as

being able to apply as well to cases of inadvertent plagiarism, as students who use

strategies such as Howard's patchwriting, or students who simply fail to acknowledge a

source for certain ideas or thoughts when they don't even really understand how they

arrived at being accused of plagiarism may not have any appropriate strategies to deal

with such accusations, because they don't entirely understand the problem – but may not

be lacking in morality. Howard addresses this issue herself when discussing patchwriting, and her interpretation is in line with East's discussion of how student goals differ from instructors. Howard writes, concerning her initial responses to patchwriting style plagiarism issues, "But there *was* something wrong with my teaching. My zeal to socialize them [her students] into the avowed conventions of academic writing was actually preventing their learning" (xviii). And while her realization was not specifically aimed in the same direction as East's, it seems that both are pointing out that instructors (and by extension, policy-makers) may benefit from perceiving the issue through the view of those students who might view their university education as less an acculturation to academic standards and more in terms, as Howard herself puts it, of "the ancient tradition of learning through apprenticeship and mimicry" (xviii).

Such discussion seems pertinent since the university's current standards allow for a wide range of sanctions for students – which may be arbitrarily assigned – and also allow professors to negotiate the waters of judgment on their own, outside the university mechanisms – and thus present an unclear picture of what the sanctions for plagiarism could be, ranging from an academic slap on the wrist – which for some students might actually equate to more time to write the papers – up to and including expulsion.

In all cases, the ultimate implications of the ongoing discussion become felt as changing theoretical views begin to move from, as Howard said, "the cutting-edge of theory" to the practical effect on the day-to-day life of students. A work such as this thesis aims less to definitively answer questions and more to expose the gaps in knowledge, the intersection of ideas, and the potential for growth and change in the policies and documents of a university such as JMU. Examining the University resources

available to students, and particular to students just learning to be a part of the academic world of the university can point out the discrepancies in the message. Why do three different definitions – that on a syllabus, the Honor Code label found through the Student Handbook, and the Honor Council statements – all appear to define plagiarism? Why does the University Writing Center offer a different definition and then proceed to explain what is expected of students only through the lens of other universities? In what ways could a tool such as Go for the Gold evolve to improve its function to unify the message of JMU in a resource that students are required to interact with as a requirement for graduation? Indeed, change may be happening. As of this writing, in June 2011, an email was sent to faculty asking for suggestions as Go for the Gold begins a process of revision. After this work, I clearly have some suggestions to share. If policy is a local choice, based on the culture of the university, then JMU should take steps to ensure that the values of JMU are represented in the resources presented to students and build that community awareness and unity of vision into policies as functional as those governing plagiarism.

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