The Plagiarism-Proof Policy Handbook:
A Multidimensional-Systems Approach
To Foster Student Writing Accountability
and Prevent Plagiarism
In College and University Classrooms

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to university instructors and faculty everywhere who continue to deal with the issues of student plagiarism. There is a lot of information about this topic in various places, and it can be difficult to sort through, so I pray that this handbook will bring a lot of information together into one location and provide a framework for dealing with this problem, as well as provide inspiration to instructors as they strive to reduce plagiarism within the university and college classrooms they work in.

I also dedicate this project to university writing departments and exam boards all over the U.S., as well as all other stakeholders responsible for university policy, curriculum, and recommended procedures for detected plagiarism. Determining those things is a great responsibility. So, I hope that this thesis will inspire the above stakeholders as they work to strengthen overall approaches to university and college writing instruction, resulting in new policies and methods that better meet the needs of students and encourage them to make ethical choices.

Lastly, this project is dedicated to all students who must learn the conventions of academic writing and master the intricacies of source attribution over the course of their university education. It is my hope that this project will (a) lead to more discussions among faculty and administrators about the environment that plagiarism operates within, (b) inspire instructors to require more writing-process artifacts to promote student research, writing, and documentation accountability, and (c) convince both stakeholders of the importance of (a) writing labs for student practice, (b) mini-courses to students in source attribution and academic discourse, and (c) the teaching of habits of mind students can apply within their academic writing and correct source attribution.
Abstract

Academic integrity, ethical research, and proper documentation practices are key values emphasized within most post-secondary academic communities. To support positive student outcomes, colleges and universities use honor codes, policy measures, and plagiarism detection systems to deter plagiarism, believing that the above measures promote ethical behavior from the students who graduate from their institutions. This thesis first recommends a broader, environmentally focused approach which examines the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of the post-secondary educational setting within universities and colleges using systems theory and strengths theory. It then identifies some important plagiarism barriers and plagiarism enablers students encounter within each environmental context above. By connecting these approaches with vital information on authorial identity, care ethics, writing-process accountability, and policy and curriculum recommendations, this author recommends a multidimensional framework to ameliorate several environmental factors that feed the plagiarism problem in post-secondary educational settings. An important undercurrent running throughout this project is that of making authentic writing more rewarding than plagiarism in post-secondary classrooms. This thesis project culminates in small handbook of policy designed to assist various stakeholders in their efforts to reduce student plagiarism. Furthermore, it includes suggestions for curriculum and policy adjustments such as teaching Arthur Costa & Kallick’s sixteen habits of mind (2008) within the university curriculum and requiring instructor-led writing practice lab classes on campus. It also includes ways various stakeholders can cooperate to effectively solve the plagiarism problem.

Keywords: academic integrity, plagiarism, systems approach, micro, mezzo, macro, habits of mind, writing labs, direct writing practice
Introduction: A Multidimensional Look at Student Plagiarism in Higher Education

The Modern Language Association (2009) stated in their introduction to the 7th edition that the level of fallout within universities and colleges from the continual struggle against plagiarism “…is turning teachers into detectives instead of mentors, fostering suspicion instead of trust, and making it difficult for learning to take place,” (MLA Handbook, 2009, p.7). Prior research has taken a close-up view of factors contributing to college and university plagiarism. However, what is needed now is broader scope, one that takes account of the various environmental systems within which the plagiarism problem operates, and then a determination of what policy and situational adjustments could be made to ameliorate it.

Former perspectives on plagiarism often characterized it as an ethical matter, or, alternatively, as a matter of understanding and remedying student motivations, learning needs, and other factors, such as authorial identity (Pittam et al, 2009). Generally, methods like these focus on one aspect of the problem at a time. Alternatively, a holistic perspective has been undertaken as well, such as the one recommended by McDonald and Caroll (2007) and has also been supported in statements by authors such as Chankova (2019). The method undertaken by McDonald & Caroll focused on the entire university arena as a place to promote academic integrity. Nonetheless, even those types of methods have not solved the problem of student plagiarism within post-secondary institutions.

Likely this is because complex problems like plagiarism tend to require multidimensional solutions. Student plagiarism is a good example of a complex problem, because even though students within universities do ultimately make the final choice to either plagiarize or correctly cite source information, they also take part in various spheres of influence within and outside of the university which affect their attitudes, their ability to comprehend academic documentation
conventions, as well as their overall writing performance. In many cases, a student's engagement within multiple spheres can have unforeseen results, regardless of how hard instructors work to help them understand academic writing and use correct documentation during the limited lecture time that they currently have.

The approach I have suggested in this thesis project allows for how complex problems rarely operate within a vacuum; they often require various modifications to the environment, i.e., including both the social and physical contexts in which the problem takes place. The following multi-dimensional approach allows multiple methods to be integrated together to solve a problem that has multiple contributors. It takes account of the environmental influences and recommends changes take place within various spheres of the educational culture including policy and curriculum.

Various aspects of culture and environment have tremendous impacts upon student engagement. There are factors that directly and immediately impact learning, such as the way instructors present concepts, the way the student interprets the concepts within his own mind (particularly how he uses his past experience to filter new knowledge coming in), as well as other factors indirectly affecting the student over time, such as the policies of the university or the amount of time a student has available for reading outside class and working on assignments.

Sometimes even indirect influences can be quite powerful. For example, the time that must be divided between work, school, family, and friends, though it is an indirect influence, greatly affects how the student prioritizes academic writing, in turn reducing the depth of learning. As well, the policies and culture with which students interact inside the university as well as the influences of the larger society, such as cultural values, political events, economic changes, and so forth further contribute to student behavior and thinking. Students are immersed
in a large, multi-dimensional, environmental field of influence, within which they construct meaning as well as make important choices about their learning daily.

Scholars within various fields, such as health, business, and social work are increasingly supporting a perspective that views certain problems as systemic, realizing that they are, in many ways, dependent on environmental conditions (Rogers, 2013). Though in times past, the blame for poor life choices was often placed on the shoulders of individuals or leaders within the immediate sphere of concern or influence, many professions are now beginning to understand that complex problems are often rooted within systems, often described in social work as micro, mezzo, and macro environments and conditions (Rogers, 2013). Harriet Bartlett was one of several people between the 1950s and 1990s who mentioned the importance of the person’s interaction with the environment to their social behavior and responses (Norton, 2011). Researchers sometimes adapted this theory and systems theory somewhat differently, though, according to the specific field in which they applied it. For example, Urie Bronfenbrenner, who called his version of the theory ecological systems, identified the individual parts of systems as micro, meso, and macro. Bronfenbrenner interpreted the micro-environment as the person’s family, school, church, and other areas where he or she interacts with directly. (Norton, 2011). In the current field of social work, however, social workers refer to the micro-environment as facets of the individual. The mezzo environment is described in social work as family, school, church, and other environmental areas of influence and interaction.

For the purposes of this paper, I have adapted the social work definition of the macro context slightly, dividing what is normally thought of as macro into two different terms based on the university situation. Instead of macro including all governing or cultural influences outside of the internal university setting, in my discussions I have separated that into two types of
environments, which I label the *macro* and the *mega*. The influences of educational governing bodies, such as university administration and accreditation agencies, are considered macro in this paper, to distinguish them from the greater influences in the larger society, which I have called mega influences. Those include things like culture changes, new technology, government policy, and so forth.

Systems, as applied to social work, is described as the interactions between people within the various environments they participate in, which is instigated and supported by the *input* behavior and *output* behavior between people and the spheres of influence they become involved in. Inputs are contributions or influences that come into an environment from outside of it. Outputs are contributions from the environment that go forth into other environments (Rogers, 2013). For example, a student (micro) (e.g. the person himself, the concepts he expresses, or the way he communicates), can introduce input into the group environment (meso) he or she is placed in. The individual (micro) person can also take in information from others in the environment. As well, other individuals can take the information (input) outside of the group, which then produces an output into a different environment such as another part of the meso, (other classes, the library, cafeteria, etc.) the macro (e.g. the university administration) , or the mega environment (society, government). The most essential take-away is that individuals do not operate or make decisions alone. They participate within various cultures and communities which influence them, and many flows of influence move back and forth between the various spheres and the individual.

Taking this a little further, any cultural sphere within which individuals interact can be understood better by imagining that each is a small community, one that also fits into larger and larger communities. This also applies to classrooms and various departments within universities
and college learning environments. Each ought to be understood as cultural or community-like spheres of influence. For an illustration of environmental spheres see Figure 1 on page 28. Post-secondary institutions, much like churches, businesses, and other community groups, create a type of culture within them which either supports or deters certain behavioral patterns. One of the integral features of communities is the sense of belonging they offer their participants, often based on following certain norms. For example, churches often support a certain type of appearance and behavior, during their services, and behavioral norms expected outside of church. These are enforced by expectations and social routines that allow space for the members to be observed as fitting into the expectations during the time participants are together.

In the same way, universities must consider how their own social norms and routines, as well as the physical spaces where academic writing takes place, work together to create environmental conditions that either facilitate or inhibit plagiarism behavior, and how much of student writing is within reach of the university to observe or influence. For example, one problem with the current settings for university and college writing is that much of the students’ actual writing takes place in other contexts besides the university. When students write at home, not only is their writing unsupported (except through searching for needed information on the internet or getting help from someone like a parent or friend), but there are other activities going on in that location which may interrupt, or in some cases, even supersede the work he or she is doing during their time there, such as chores, family interactions, visits from friends, plans to attend events outside the home, and so forth. The values a student may be focusing on in that location can be somewhat different than when they are within the university setting.
Through this thesis, I have considered ways that the environmental conditions within post-secondary institutions could be adjusted to better deter university student plagiarism. The following problems seem to me to support plagiarism indirectly.

- Writing is known to be a complex skill. Classes include lecture time, but writing practice rarely takes place within the university setting. Most written work is done outside of class time, making the content of student work outside the influence of the university.

- The degree of student writing success often depends on student’s time management and work-life balance. Yet, there is no policy or curriculum requirement that instructors set aside time for the students to practice writing, work on upcoming written assignments, or receive feedback.

- There are relatively no university policies that require writing process accountability for student assignments. Though Fischer & Zigmund (2011) recommended that instructors require outlines and rough drafts prior to submission of student papers, and many already do this, most do not request additional assignment-engagement artifacts such as evidence of brainstorming, note-taking from scientific articles, synthesis matrices, reflections, and so forth.

- Broad writing composition courses are basically “catch-alls.” Each course must cover multiple aspects of writing throughout the course, which does not give enough time for deep learning of source attribution.

If universities and colleges can adjust the environment that plagiarism thrives within, they can also affect student “buy in,” something which plays a larger role in both intentional and unintentional plagiarism. What post-secondary institutions most need to do is to help students
develop a greater level of comfort with academic writing skills, but this depends greatly on what happens within the university’s spheres of influence. No doubt, academic communities, who through their attention to the environmental influences within their institutions, become more successful at helping students develop a strong feeling of self-efficacy (Hopper, 2019) and authorial identity (Pittam et al., 2009), it serves to “inoculate” students against plagiarism, reducing the amount that takes place within their campuses. To successfully accomplish this goal, the major decision-makers of university policy and curriculum standards, as well as instructors and support personnel, must work together to provide an environment that supports students and helps them to value authentic writing, learning, research, and documentation. I hope through this thesis to persuade the highly qualified and distinguished tertiary-education policy and curriculum decision-makers to apply the recommendations in this document to improve the outcomes for university and college students and to deter them from plagiarism.

**About the Handbook of Policy**

A handbook of policy has been placed in this thesis to offer tertiary decision-makers some suggestions for practical environmental, policy, and curriculum adjustments for courses which involve academic writing. The handbook relates those recommendations to the environments within which they will be most useful. It is my hope that the major decision makers will consider these modifications to make positive changes within post-secondary educational institutions.

The recommendations discussed within the handbook are grounded in the systems approach. For this reason, they are classified under micro, meso, macro, and mega considerations. I have gathered support for these recommendations from a considerable body of research, which I have condensed within the literature review in Chapter 2.
On the following page is a summary of each chapter included in this thesis, followed by a glossary of key terms that will be useful in navigating the thesis. Included also in the key terms section is the operating definition of plagiarism that I have embraced throughout this project, including a list of behaviors that I consider plagiarism and others which I feel do not meet the qualifications of the definition.

Chapter Descriptions

This project is divided into four chapters. Each is devoted to various components of the thesis, which I will describe below.

Chapter 1

In this chapter, I introduce the topic of environment systems, and explain how those contribute to the problem of plagiarism within post-secondary educational institutions. Included is an ecomap which illustrates the nature of various environmental spheres that affect both learning and student plagiarism at various levels. I have also shared some vignettes to illustrate a couple of student plagiarism scenarios and how spheres of influence can affect the decision-making processes of students, their academic honesty, and mastery of academic writing.

Chapter 2

In this chapter, I review the literature on plagiarism that contributed to my understanding of this topic. There is a plethora of information available, as it was a hot topic during the early 2000s. With that said, I am quite grateful to previous researchers for their former research in this field of inquiry and wish to thank them all for providing light to my path.
Chapter 3

This chapter is essentially the *Handbook of Plagiarism-Proof Policy* which I wish to recommend to the major decision makers in higher education, particularly those in North America. The handbook is divided into sections. Part one is introductory material. The first chapter addresses the meta environment and includes policy and curriculum suggestions that can be recommended or required by state governments, accreditation agencies, and so forth. Part three is a handbook of policy which suggests some ways to improve various aspects of the university environment to ameliorate the problem of student plagiarism. An additional part is written for collaborative efforts, including recommendations for how support staff may contribute to reducing plagiarism.

Chapter 4

In this final chapter, I discuss my conclusions and some recommendations for the future as well as for more research. I bring this to a close with a finishing statement that shines a light on hope for the future in the reduction of plagiarism.

Note that, beginning on the following page, is a glossary of key words used frequently or which may be somewhat confusing or contentious in their meaning within academic circles. Included within the glossary of terms is also my working definition of plagiarism which I used for this project.
Purpose and Theoretical Orientation of the Project

This project was undertaken in hopes that researchers and university faculty begin to understand plagiarism within the environmental spheres within which it takes place as well as make suggestions where improvements can be made. This also offers an opportunity adopt some new terms to make plagiarism definitions more practical. What is especially beneficial about the systems terms micro, meso, and macro to describe the environmental spheres is that they can help universities envision how to ameliorate problems affected by each environmental sphere with changes in policy and/or the curriculum. For more study on ways to describe particular acts of plagiarism, I suggest reading Wager (2013), which went into much greater detail concerning the various factors influencing definitions and responses to plagiarism, and who provided several more focal points, applying it both to instruction within educational institutions and also editorial and publishing circles.

As mentioned within the beginning of this introduction, I based this new categorization of ecosystems on social work systems theory, which what is often alternatively labeled as the person-in-environment perspective (Norton, 2011; Rogers, 2013). This perspective recommends that problem solutions take account of the environments in which they take place in trying to explain human behavior. This lens for viewing human behavior gets to the roots of complex issues rather than just treating the symptoms. Applying systems theory can often result in transformative solutions. This is why the systems perspective is beginning to be applied in other fields such as healthcare and business (Katrakazas et al, 2020; Strich & Strich, 2016). Katrakazas et al (2020) expressed their disconcern that, in spite of how this theory should have already been applied within the field, reports of this within healthcare research remain sparce.
**Micro-environmental influences on plagiarism** is my suggested new term for the type of plagiarism that happens mostly due to student motivations, time-management issues, and so forth. A study by Yu, et al (2017) found associations between self-reports of university student cheating of all types and the following student (micro) characteristics indicated an increase in cheating behavior: sex (male more often reported than female), low-socioeconomic status reported more often than high-socioeconomic status, lower level of self-control, higher self-interest, greater length of time involved in university or college studies, and involvement in work and social events outside of class.

The word micro (Rogers, 2013) does not alone indicate the level of severity. It simply suggests the likely environmental influence or source. The term could be further divided into levels of severity such as mild, moderate, and severe micro-plagiarism. Each of the three types has the intentionality embedded within the definition; however, the solution is rooted not in whether the plagiarism was intentional but rather to the appropriate environmental target and remedies one could use to ameliorate the behavior. For example, micro-plagiarism often happens based on the student’s decision-making process, something that happens within his mind. It can happen on a range of highly intentional or mildly intentional but what is more important is the types of intervention needed in the environment to safeguard students and the university from repeated incidents. Hence, all stakeholder could benefit from the university taking up the following interventions: habits of mind training, time management training, instructor-led guided writing sessions to develop authorial identity, low-stakes assignments, writing process artifacts, creating graduate plagiarism detection committees and writing labs which set aside writing space for assignments. In some cases, training in documentation and argumentation
strategies would also be in order since a student’s decision to plagiarize may relate to avoiding the complex task of academic writing.

*Meso-environmental influences on plagiarism* is my chosen term to describe the type that happens not due to student motivations but rather to the classroom culture, the student’s family culture, and the differences in perspective those brings about. The environment could be remedied by explaining plagiarism and academic integrity policies, using vignettes to illustrate various plagiarism scenarios, (LeHigh University, n.d.), using honor codes, providing required guided writing practice, creating graduate plagiarism detection committees, as well as requiring classes that explain documentation, information literacy, and argumentation.

*Macro-environmental influences on plagiarism* is a label I will choose to describe the type of plagiarism that relates to the larger environment of policy within the university and the tertiary bodies that determine the curriculum for various fields of study within the university.

*Mega-environmental* plagiarism is my label for the type of plagiarism that is rooted in the effects of societal changes, as well as the ease of copy and paste, such as patchwriting (Rogerson, 2017), something which Howard (1995) rightly called a “pedagogical opportunity, not a juridical problem,” (p. 788) Society’s changes that have resulted in the current remix culture were discussed at length by Murray (2015). This type of plagiarism could likely benefit from plagiarism policy explanations and vignettes, guided writing practice, explanation of academic ethics, training in documentation styles and argumentation, instructor-guided writing practice, and the development of graduate plagiarism committees.

Moreover, university faculty should not only use the definitions as categories of plagiarism, but it would help to also apply them within their university by labeling and assessing the types of plagiarism most common within their respective educational institutions. To do so,
they can measure what environmental types are supporting plagiarism most frequently within their institution, then apply the suggested strategies from the enclosed handbook to remedy the most prevalent issues at that time.

Each type of environmental facilitator of plagiarism needs to be connected with one or more viable solutions. Once these are put into place, instructors and academic integrity boards will likely spend less time having to define plagiarism behavior, determine the presence of and extent of it, and, ultimately, will have to recommend fewer sanctions or corrections.
Key Terms Used in This Project

**Absent Student Voice:** Relying too much on source material and not adding one’s own interpretation and voice within an academic paper that requires argumentation (for example, one that requires a rhetorical approach rather than an informative one, such as a formal research paper). (Yang, et al, 2019)

**Authorial Identity:** “The sense a writer has of themselves as an author and the textual identity they construct in their writing,” (Pittam et al, 2009, p. 154).

**Care-Ethics Approach:** This is an approach to dealing with student acts of plagiarism that recognizes the importance of academic writing integrity, but with a primary focus on helping students understand and correct plagiarism. It focuses on learning opportunities and positive change (Vehvillainen et al, 2017).

**Collegiality or Collegial Cooperation:** This refers to a working environment in which teachers work together in an attitude of mutual respect and support (Shah, 2012).

**Eco-social Approach (or Systems Theory):** Models of human interactions within various environments that contribute to the whole of individual and group experiences, based on the *person-in-environment* perspective (Norton, 2011).

**Habits of Mind:** Costa & Kallick (2008) researched ways to help students learn intellectual habits that would help them achieve deeper learning which they could apply to various problems and situations throughout their lives. They developed 16 habits of mind, which include the following dimensions: “value, inclination, sensitivity, capability, commitment, and policy” (p. 17), and they promote the following traits: “persisting, managing impulsivity, listening with understanding and empathy, thinking flexibly, metacognition, striving for accuracy, questioning and posing problems, applying past knowledge to new situations, thinking and communicating
with clarity and precision, gathering data through all senses; creating, imagining, innovating; responding with wonderment and awe; taking responsible risks, finding humor, thinking interdependently, remaining open to continuous learning “ (pp. 8-13). Although the traits were described distinctly from each other, Costa and Kallick (2008) recommended using combinations of habits, forming form habit clusters, since they work best when used together (Costa & Kallick, 2008, p. 400).

**Low-stakes assignments/High-stakes assignments:** Low stakes assignments include smaller steps toward a larger assignment, such that each one contributes to a grade, but there are many opportunities for success. High stakes assignments are complex assignments that count for a considerable amount of a person’s course grade.

**Macro-sphere of influence:** A social and physical boundary within tertiary institutions that includes the university’s policies, curriculum, buildings, and administrative leaders.

**Mega-sphere of influence:** A social and physical boundary that goes beyond the tertiary institution students participate in, including the larger society and the world as large.

**Meso-sphere of influence:** An environment of influence within tertiary institutions that is in between micro (the individual) and the macro (that of the university, policies, and curriculum).

**Micro-sphere of influence:** An environment of influence limited to the individual student, his attitudes, goals, priorities, thoughts, emotions, and decisions (Rogers, 2013)

**Multidimensional-Systems Approach:** An approach that uses multiple solutions in a holistic manner to solve complex problems. It is based on systems theory (Rogers, 2013).

**Plagiarism or Misappropriation:** (See categories below)
**Developmental Plagiarism:** Plagiarism that happens because of the learning curve experienced in learning how to correctly document their sources, including, but not limited to the following situations: (1) When a student thinks it is ok to change a few words here and there or to use small parts of a source without documenting it, sometimes called *patchwork plagiarism*, as described in Rogerson (2017), (2) when a student fails to use quotation marks and a citation to indicate a direct quote, but places a citation near the quote, and (3) when a student fails to also include personal interpretations or contribution/s within a submitted written assignment, relying solely on others’ former works with little personal engagement with the topic.

**Irresponsible Documentation:** When a student unknowingly fails to acknowledge an original researcher or copyrighted writer’s work with an appropriate citation within a submitted written assignment because he is not familiar with the person’s work and his words also happen to be similar to the author’s.

**Intentional Plagiarism:** When a student uses a paper written by a friend, family member, or other personal or social acquaintance. (University of Pittsburg Library Guides, 2020).

Alternatively, this is when a student purchases a paper from an online paper mill or other stranger who wrote the paper.

**Multiple submissions (often called self-plagiarism):** This is considered plagiarism within many universities but, for definitional purposes, not in this thesis: When a student submits an entire paper previously submitted or published by the student (without the instructor’s permission), or, alternatively, when a student re-uses a part or parts of a paper previously submitted or published without citing the passage/s or getting permission from the instructor to do so. (Bretag, 2015).
**Rule-ethical (or Strict-ethics) Approach:** An approach to responding to plagiarism that values rules and policies, thus applying them without much consideration of the student, his/her intentions, and the causes of plagiarism acts (Vehvillainen et al, 2017).

**Self-efficacy:** The belief in one’s competence to perform or succeed at an activity (Hopper, 2019)

**Self-regulation Learning:** Learning that takes place when a student directs his/her own learning process and goals, based on internal initiative, not that of the instructor. This implies an active approach rather than one that is passive, and which requires perseverance and the ability to change strategies when needed (Teng & Zhang, (2018); Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001).

**Spheres of Influence:** Cultural locations and boundaries in which people interact and make meaning from the places and people who surround them (Crouch, 2008)

**Systems Theory:** A theory that explains human behavior as being affected by the social systems in which they interact (Rogers, 2013). See Eco-social Approach.

**They Say, I Say Approach:** An approach to teaching academic writing created by Gerald Graff and Cathy Bickenstein that introduced a way of viewing academic writing as a conversation and offered templates for teaching students rhetoric styles so as to help them grasp and master the art of academic argumentation (Graff & Birkenstein, 2006).
Chapter 1: The Post-Secondary Cultural Environment: Micro, Meso, and Macro Factors and How They Contribute to Student Plagiarism

As Crouch (2008) explained so well, *spheres of culture* are the product of “people making something of the world—it is never a solitary affair,” (p. 40, 41), and these cultural environments contain “special powers,” (p. 44), meaning that they contain laws, rituals, and social expectations. Crouch also pointed out that they “overlap and influence each another,” (p.44). What Crouch meant is that individual and group behavior and attitudes are shaped by the places, people, and physical environments those individuals and groups interact within. For example, in the classroom environment students interact with the instructor, other students, the physical space, classroom routines, policies, and the cultural environment created by the people, which also may or may not include just standard lectures or small group instruction. The instructor’s inclusiveness or lack thereof, as well as each student’s comfort in sharing thoughts and emotions also directly affect the amount of classroom participation that takes place within the environment.

This view can also be applied to the cultural sphere/s established within post-secondary educational environments. Students’ decisions about academic integrity, in many cases, take place outside of the educational institution, since written assignments are often written at home, the library, the writing center, or other locations. It is safe to assume that this, in some way, increases the probability that factors outside of the university environment will affect the outcome of student’s decisions about academic honesty. Being outside of the university environment will naturally divide one’s focus between various life priorities. This supports the resulting observation that problems with plagiarism (intentional or unintentional), can and should be understood and described in terms of the influence of the spheres (environments) that foster
them. Other spheres (macro, meso, and mega) either directly (meso) or indirectly (macro and mega) influence the student’s micro-sphere, which is their mental space. Through verbal and nonverbal communication, student’s own mental space communicates with the outside world, giving and receiving input to and from others, such that ideas and thoughts flow back and forth, sometimes from their micro sphere to the outer sphere/s and other times from the outer sphere/s to the micro sphere. As a student is immersed within these spaces, values and beliefs are either received or rejected based on how receptive the student or others are to the inputs being sent to them. Another salient point is that not only is the micro-sphere comprised of the students’ thoughts and feelings, it also includes the student’s goals, dreams, priorities, needs, and so forth that have already been set over time, but are also subject to change depending on the nature of the inputs and the student’s receptivity to the inputs. However, the micro space also includes the physical space the student occupies physically within the environment, something which also affects his comfort or ability to sustain attention during class.

There are permeable mental, social, and physical boundaries between the student and what is external to him, both socially and physically, including other people, beliefs, and their own interactions. However, the student, himself, can only make limited choices about what enters his own micro-sphere because of subconscious processes. As well, there are many prior mental habits, beliefs, and so forth stored already that may interfere with new learning. Therefore, classroom and university culture are especially important.

In contrast to the micro-environment of the student, external environments go beyond the boundaries of the individual himself. The immediate physical and social environments in which students participate more directly could be labeled as *meso-spheres*. This can include environments such as the classroom culture/s (meso), the student’s circle of friends, or their
family culture. The larger environment of the university, which has policies that students must observe as a student, can be described as a macro-sphere of influence. Society could be labeled as a kind of mega-sphere of influence, one in which all the others are placed, and which it affects daily. On the following page, Figure 1 below illustrates these spheres of culture and influence.

**Figure 1: Environmental Spheres of Influence on Student Plagiarism Behavior in Post-Secondary Institutions**

Source: Author

Just as important, though, is that the student himself also becomes an influencer within all the other environments, or spheres, he interacts with. For example, the student’s simple choice to ask a question or to hold back, or even to monopolize class time with excessive questions will affect not only his own learning but that of other students’. For example, if a student wishes to ask a question about citation, but the environment does not feel inclusive to him, or if he has experienced other classroom situations that made him uncomfortable, this likely will result in
him not asking the question (avoidance). He may instead figure out the answer on his own, (self-regulated learning), which can have either a positive or negative effect on his personal success at solving the problem depending on whether he is able to figure this out on his own. Inability to figure things out can sometimes lead to frustration and negative feelings about oneself. For example, in applying this to correct source documentation, a student who has difficulty putting thoughts into his own words and in using correct citations, and who also is not comfortable asking questions, may try to document sources and do it incorrectly, or he may abandon documentation altogether (avoidance) and just state it as if it was his own material, hoping that this goes unnoticed by the instructor and/or the plagiarism software.

Another side to this situation can be seen where the student, by holding back and not asking the question in class, also robs other learners from increasing their knowledge of documentation than if he had asked the question. Additionally, the instructor, in this case, is led to believe that students understand the intricacies of documentation more than they actually do, which will ultimately affect her approach to not only the current class time, but also future lessons. It could even affect the content of related classes in which she may assume that certain information is not necessary to teach directly.

Considering these interactions and outputs that can happen within educational and other social spheres students act within, it is easy to imagine that the actual number of influences could be too many to count. This underscores how student outcomes depend greatly on how often individuals share thoughts and feelings, how willing they are to ‘buy in’ to the classroom culture, the content of assignments and lesson plans, and the opportunity to practice writing and ask questions.
Vignettes 1 and 2, located on pages 33 and 38, illustrate two scenarios in which multiple environmental spheres, (micro, meso, macro, and mega), have affected a student’s decisions and feelings about academic writing. They also illustrate why policies to deter plagiarism must be considered from the viewpoint of a multidimensional systems approach. Following each scenario is an explanation of how each sphere of influence affects the student in the vignette.
Vignette 1

John is a 31-year-old first-year, first-semester undergraduate at Jackson University who in high school struggled with academic writing. He has a six-year old son who he only gets to see every other weekend. On those weekends, John’s opportunity to work on academic projects is limited because of this. He also works two jobs, one at Walmart, and another at a local convenience store, and is attending the university to get a degree in accounting. He especially looks forward to the day when he will be able to not only quit the night job at the convenience store down the road but also afford a better life for himself and his son. He just returned from an appointment with a writing center tutor. His instructor suggested this would help him with source documentation and revisions. Fortunately, the tutor did offer some great suggestions for improving his 10-page paper (which must be a 15-page paper by tomorrow according to the assignment guidelines). However, John must first attend two more classes before he can work on the paper at all, then at 5 p.m., he must go to his job at the convenience store. The paper is due the next day, and the syllabus states that the instructor does not take late papers. It also briefly mentions the university penalties for plagiarism, but the instructor has only briefly explained proper documentation in class. John has another ten-page paper due in another course just two days later. Mr. Sims, his boss, has scheduled him to work seven nights straight. John will be working until nearly midnight, then he must come home, make a light supper, and get in bed so that he can get up early again and go to his other job. He considers whether he could call in tonight and finish the paper, but he knows that Mr. Sims does not tolerate call in’s without giving notice by that morning. After working on the paper about thirty minutes, John realizes things are not going as well as he expected them to. Soon, he must leave to go to work. What sounded simple when the tutor talked about it has now become a tangled-up mess. In fact, at this point, he
wonders if he is just making the paper worse. He calls a friend of his from a different class to vent on the way to work, who then tells him that last semester he was in a similar situation, so he purchased a paper on a website and made an A after submitting it, and how he felt a little guilty that, even though one of his best friends in class actually wrote his paper and worked very hard on it, but only made a B. His friend tells him the name of the website where he got the paper. After thinking about it awhile, John decides to do the same thing, though he feels a little guilty about it, because it counts for 150 points of his grade, and he cannot afford to mess up his GPA.

Vignette Source: Author
In reading the vignette, one can see that there are spheres of social and physical influence on John’s decision to purchase a paper online instead of maintaining his academic integrity. First of all, the mega sphere of cultural influence, (larger society), which values education and makes certain jobs available only to those who have certain certificates and degrees, has influenced John to enter the academic community in search of an education so that he can provide a better life for himself and his son. The mega sphere also involves the economy, which also influence John could have decided instead to pursue a different career that did not require this, but his micro (mental attitudes, information, emotions, etc.) and perhaps even other influences such as family members, friends, etc. (meso influences) could have also influenced his mental space, leading him to choose this path instead. Perhaps, John feels with an education, he will also feel

Source: Author
better about himself, (micro influence) but this could be something below his level of conscious awareness. Still, all these factors will influence the development of his university education and the choices he makes, including whether to maintain academic integrity, because grades hugely determine a person’s success within higher institutions of learning. The decision to plagiarize could also be influenced by the macro influences of the university administrative policies, particularly those of financial aid and the deans who determine whether a student will or will not be put on academic probation for poor grades. If John was thinking more about losing his financial aid or about being put on academic probation for poor grades, that would more likely lead to purchasing a paper than if he were thinking then about the risks of getting caught plagiarizing within the paper.

Another consideration is John’s orientation to time management. Problems with time management have been linked to university student cheating (Burnett et al., 2016). A student who does not understand that time is a limited resource may make decisions in their personal and work life that undermine their educational pursuits. For example, John does not realize that working two jobs is probably too much for someone who has writing difficulties and who has outside responsibilities like childcare on the weekends. It stands to reason that this difficulty with time management could lead John to feel that having to do written assignments that are lengthy and so close together in due dates is unfair to him in a very personal way, especially when other students who are younger than him have so much more time and they also have been exposed to newer teaching methods in writing that he never had the opportunity to learn, but now must learn all of this in a very short amount of time to succeed with the assignment. Before John can make the university environment work better for him, he needs to be able to talk with his instructors more about his particular situation as well as his boss, and possibly even obtain some childcare.
occasionally for times when he needs to focus on assignments. However, universities could also
make time management much easier for students as well as offer them on-campus writing
support. My recommendations for how this could be done will be discussed in the handbook that
follows in Chapter three.

Although this is not stated specifically in the vignette, we can intuit that John’s mental
space (micro) likely contains a belief that he is not an “author” (poor authorial identity), based on
what the vignette stated about his past difficulty with writing. This belief alone could lead him to
choose to purchase a paper, especially as it relates to the ability to make a satisfactory grade on
his writing assignment (which also has a high point value). At such a hectic time, he is likely to
be focusing solely on how he needs to pass the course. Burnett et al (2016) identified grades as a
significant motive for student cheating.

A classroom culture that supports authorial identity is integral to changing negative
student self-perceptions about their writing. This is because mezzo (classroom) influences can
modify the mental space (micro) of students, supporting further improvements in student writing,
which indirectly also bolsters their ability to maintain a higher level of academic integrity.
However, this cannot be done effectively without increasing the opportunity for direct and
focused instruction while students practice writing within a social sphere that reinforces the
proper values, content, styles, and rhetoric of academic writing, and it must offer students a
space in which actual hands-on writing is the only thing being focused on, giving the opportunity
for them to give and receive feedback.

The most important take-away from this vignette, however, is that certain factors present
in each sphere become either plagiarism facilitators or plagiarism inhibitors, which serve to
influence students’ decisions concerning academic integrity. Plagiarism facilitators are those
social and physical factors that make plagiarism more likely to happen in student work. Plagiarism inhibitors are those that inoculate students against plagiarism and make it less likely. Using the right plagiarism inhibitors can strengthen the student’s resistance to either (1) be careless with documentation efforts, or (2) intentionally plagiarize. They also provide knowledge that is necessary to prevent insufficient documentation. If the micro-environment, (the student’s mental space), is not already strong enough to resist the temptation to take shortcuts, the desire to avoid the effort required to do authentic academic writing may outweigh any risks, as one will see in the following vignette.

Vignette 2

Ji-Woo is a 21-year-old female who is a second-semester undergraduate Millworth University who came to the United States to get a university education in English with native English-speaking faculty. She is not yet fluent in English, and struggles with some of her writing assignments, though in her country of South Korea she did well in school. There, writing academic papers seemed simpler. Her classes were taught in her mother tongue; there was no rule that students must cite each of their sources. The premise there is that knowledge is communal, not owned by a single person. In her current classes, it is difficult for her to determine what is common knowledge and what she should cite. During her first semester composition class, she struggled, but managed to make a B. A friend talked her into changing her major to social work. So, now, after already learning MLA to use for accounting papers, she must learn APA for social work. Ji-Woo is shy and dreads going to the instructor’s office to talk about her paper, but she drops by one afternoon for with APA documentation rules for an assignment due the next day. However, the time with her instructor is much less than she really needs because of the complexity of the material. Her instructor uses English idioms she does not
understand. Afterwards, she remembers her professor mentioned the campus writing center as another source of help, so she goes there, where a lady at the desks assigns her to a tutor, a young woman named Ashley, who is about her same age, but a traditional American student. Ashley asks Ji-Woo to read her paper aloud. This is not at all something Ji-Woo expected. She feels embarrassed because other students in the writing center will hear her draft read aloud, but to be polite she complies to the suggestion. The tutor finds other issues that need fixing. For example, Ji-Woo formatted the running head in her paper incorrectly and there are also places where her writing is not as clear as it should be. Unfortunately, by the time Ji-Woo leaves the writing center, she is dreading all the revisions she will have to make. Later that evening, she has a phone conversation with her mother, who still lives overseas. Her mother is worried that Ji-Woo may forget her family and her cultural heritage while away at school. She also expresses strong disapproval of Anja’s change of major, worrying that it will take her longer now to finish school and return home to South Korea. After getting off the phone, Ji-Woo wonders if she should just return home after the semester where academic writing is not so complex. By then, it is already 6 p.m. and she decides that she really does not have enough time to worry about the finer aspects of documentation. She will just do her best and let the instructor give her whatever grade she decides. Unfortunately, she fails to document quite a few sources. She uses direct quotes without placing them in quotation marks and citing the source. A few days later Ji-Woo receives a letter from her instructor stating that the Turnitin percentage for her paper was quite high, and that she has concerns about it.

Vignette Source: Author
Much like as in John’s case. This second case, that of Ji-Woo, illustrates multiple spheres of influence contributing to Ji-Woo’s decision to take a chance on inadvertent plagiarism and ultimately receive a high score on Turnitin and an email from her instructor, who wonders if she plagiarized the assignment. First, the mega-sphere influence of Ji-Woo’s original culture and the clash between that and the university culture (macro-sphere), plus the higher education and fields of practice (accounting and social work) expectation, (mega-sphere influences), that determine the expected formats for different majors (macro-sphere) are all interfering with her learning and using accurate documentation of sources. Furthermore, her instructor (meso-sphere) may not be aware of the differences in cultural expectations for academic writing documentation between Ji-Woo’s mother country and the one she resides in now. It makes it harder for her to distinguish
between what is communal knowledge and what should be cited. Additionally, Ji-Woo’s understanding of English (micro-sphere) also complicates her ability to foresee what needs to be documented and to understand the different rules of the new style (APA) of formatting and citation to which she is not yet accustomed. All of this leaves a lot of room for error. She has likely spent more time on trying to fix the running head, the content, and the organization of the paper, since this is what the tutor (meso-sphere) suggested, and it made more sense to her than what the instructor (meso-sphere) told her to do. The problem is that this focus and her internal attitude of surrender to whatever grade she may be given, plus her attitude that documentation is not as important as the time constraints she has and just getting the work submitted have put her in a position to be accused of plagiarism though it was not intentional.

In summary, it is integral to plagiarism prevention to focus on reducing plagiarism in all university and college spheres of influence. I am convinced this can be done by adding more instructor-guided writing opportunities, requiring consistent artifacts from the student writing process for larger assignments, and a few other things I have discussed in the handbook.

An important observation to note is that the flow of plagiarism influence goes from the mega to the micro because of the innate power of the mega environmental influences, including state and federal governments and accreditation agencies, who recommend policies and curriculum expectations, as well as state and federal governments, who provide some of the financial support for educational institutions. The macro environment of the university shares some of the same responsibilities as the mega decisio-makers, however, in that each university’s administration decides their own plagiarism policies, develops their own honor codes, and is responsible for enforcing the policy and curriculm details necessary to fulfill accreditation
requirements. If policies and curriculum are not ideal for student learning, then those things that need correction become mega-sphere and macro-sphere facilitators for student plagiarism.

In contrast, much of the burden for actually putting learning outcomes into action falls to the influencers within the meso environment, i.e. instructors, although there is some important meso support for this built in. Faculty have the following meso support at their disposal, university library staff and the university writing center, neither of which have the same level of responsibility as instructors for student outcomes. Nevertheless, plagiarism that is facilitated at the meso level can be especially problematic, because, it just makes sense that the more that staff interact with students, the more impact those staff will have on students behavior, although there are exceptions to this. Nonetheless, mega and macro staff are actually in a better position to safeguard students from plagiarism, in spite of their environmental distance, since they are able to enforce teacher’s use of the classroom culture if needed, to refine course requirements, and to detail what is expected within the curriculum. They have the most legitimate power to accomplish these things within the entire university, whereas teachers only have legitimate power within their own classrooms.
Figure 4: Plagiarism Facilitators and Inhibitors

Source: Author
Discussion: Plagiarism Facilitators and Inhibitors

The diagram on the previous page illustrates the various spheres that facilitate or inhibit student plagiarism. The joint influence of the spheres (micro, meso, macro, and mega) blend together to affect the writing and documentation decisions students make.

Some examples of plagiarism facilitators include the following:

- Student has little time for academic writing or time management issues
- Student has inadequate support for learning source documentation conventions
- Instructor uses high-stakes writing assignments with high point values
- The classroom methods and culture do not offer much support for student authorial identity
- The student has not developed positive habits of mind to support learning
- Cultural, social, cognitive or language differences that hinder writing and documentation.

The things above tend to increase the likelihood of student plagiarism. In other cases, spheres of influence can have a positive result. In this thesis, I have called those things plagiarism inhibitors. Plagiarism inhibitors help safeguard student writing against the likelihood of plagiarism by making authentic writing not only possible but required. This is in keeping with the statement of Wooesner (2004) that cost-benefit ratios of doing the work involved in writing a paper and documenting it properly vs. purchasing a paper or using copy/paste do figure into some students’ decisions on whether to plagiarize, though Sierra and Hyman (2006) clarified this by saying that students also anticipate an emotional outcome based on whether they are likely to succeed at it or not, and this affects their decision to remain honest or to cheat. They also pointed
out that a low locus of control tends to be a characteristic associated with students who cheat because they believe that others, not themselves, control their grades, in contrast with those with a high locus of control, who believe grades reflect their effort and achievement.

Thus, it makes sense to reward authentic effort on the part of students instead of making plagiarism the easier choice. A few examples of plagiarism inhibitors include (1) instructor-guided writing practice, (2) low-stakes writing assignments, (3) enhanced teaching of proper documentation, (4) increased support of student authorial identity, (5) inclusion of habits of mind in the curriculum, and (6) instructor understanding and allowance for cultural differences in the methods they select to teach academic writing.

Figure 5 on page 90 shows the various environmental options for doing writing assignments, as well as how those environments either provide the support for the mastery and use of source documentation, or do not do so. Intuitively-speaking, it seems logical that the presence or absence of support could influence whether plagiarism is present in student writing, since students often depend on instructors to provide information about how to properly do their writing assignments. Students may fall into inadvertent plagiarism for a number of reasons, but often it is because (1) they do not know enough about correct documentation, (Gallant, 2019), (2) because the source seems extremely credible or noteworthy (Bink et al., (2010), or (3) they feel unsupported in their learning (Gallant, 2019). Instructor-guided writing practice could be adapted to serve multiple student needs and considerations while the instructor works with individual students or facilitates student writing groups.

Figure four on the previous page illustrates various contexts in which students may engage in writing assignments or practice, noting the benefits and drawbacks of each context. In *lecture-only focused classes*, shown in the bottom left part of the oval, students typically do not
write in class. During the lecture, they receive beneficial information about correct academic writing and documentation from instructors, but little to no practice, which does not offer a chance to immediately apply the information being learned.

In the usual contexts where students write assignments, at home or the library, the activity is usually solitary and provides no direct feedback or support, unless the student requests the help of another individual, who likely is not able to provide the same type of help their instructor could. Additionally, the student’s writing is totally dependent on his/her engagement and understanding.

In the third context, pictured in the bottom right of the oval, is an illustration which depicts student appointments within the campus writing center, where students can receive in-person feedback and support from a tutor. The tutor, however, serves only as a peer-level coach. There is usually no direct instructor-support, and the tutors often may not be familiar with details like amended assignment guidelines which are not listed in the assignment directions and

The next chapter offers a chance to review some of the relevant scholarship which supports a multidimensional-systems perspective. It will shed some more light on why the suggestions I offer in Chapter 4, the Handbook of Plagiarism-Proof Policy, are important for curriculum decision-makers to consider including in future versions of tertiary policy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Going Beyond Definitions, Honor Codes, and Sanctions in Deterring Plagiarism

Some of the research on plagiarism states faults the way it is defined in most university and college circles, affirming that the intricacies are confusing to many people (Bretag, 2013; Choo & Megan, 2013). In fact, one study stated that a stable definition must be conceived first
before the problem can be eradicated (Choo & Megan, 2013). Bretag (2013) confirmed this
notion indirectly, however, when she stated that even though some definitions may be quite
descriptive, they still fall short in clarifying “where sloppy referencing becomes serious
plagiarism” for both students and instructors (Bretag, 2013, p. 2). This calls into question
whether the intricacies of plagiarism can be clear for students if they are not already clear to
instructors, since instructors establish the classroom culture for students, which is the meso-
environment in which they learn academic writing and documentation.

**Academic Writing is a Complex Skill**

McDonald and Caroll (2006) and almost every other scholar who has written about
plagiarism has mentioned that writing is a *complex* skill, but what seems to be lacking in the
larger writing community is an intuitive understanding that just like any other complex skill, the
conventions of academic writing are best learned within a culture that provides modeling,
opportunities for imitation, and practice. The complexity of academic argument and
documentation make adequate support essential in the same way it is for any other complex skill
commonly does. One would never dream of only explaining to a medical student how to perform
surgery then sending him into the operating room, nor would one tell an individual how to play
an instrument then expect them to go home and be able to play a symphony. However, a similar
thing happens every day in many writing classrooms, in which students are told “how to write,”
and then are expected to go home and write as if they had been doing it a long time. Effective
teaching of any complex skill always includes modeling, imitation, and practice, and some of
this should happen within the time teachers and university students spend together so that all
students can receive feedback and correction.
For this reason, I conclude that not only do students need practice to learn the basic moves of academic writing, they also need this to avoid plagiarism. Therefore, direct guidance within in a nurturing classroom culture (meso environment) is so important.

The Social Nature of Academic Writing

Deptula (n.d.) cited Roozen et al. (2015), recalling their perspective on the social nature of academic writing, saying that

At first, writing may seem like a solitary activity; we often seclude ourselves within the confines of our laptop screen or busily scribble away with a pen. Although we draw heavily on our own thoughts, ideas, and previous approaches when we begin to compose a draft, writing is rather a social activity in which we must cultivate an awareness of our audience and recognize the other. Knowing this fact, helps university writing departments, instructors, and the administrative influences above them realize that any discussion of helping students better understand academic writing, as well as documentation, will require more interaction with student writers in the sphere in which they actually write, so that this social communication can happen, and students can take account of the need to appeal to an academic audience in their writing. The way the understanding of audience can help students with documentation is that when they write in the presence of instructors, and when they participate in peer review, their work will be examined for both clarity and documentation, producing a social need to take account of an academic audience, something that is harder to replicate when writing alone.

Assessing the Level of University Plagiarism
Measures of the prevalence of plagiarism within colleges and universities are significant because they let university decision-makers know that a significant problem exists. Research has confirmed that percentages of plagiarism within post-secondary institutions percentages vary based on the methods used, and many are based on student’s reports of their own plagiarism (Bretag, 2013; Ewing et al., 2015; Kaposi & Dell, 2012; Risquez et al. (2013). A more alarming estimate was given by Royce (2003), who stated at the time of his study that about 3000 out of 10,000 or more papers examined by Turnitin every 24 hours showed significant plagiarism; however, one should keep in mind that high percentages on Turnitin do not always indicate plagiarism (Walker, 2009). Walker (2009) did a study in which he stated that self-reports were unreliable measures, and he disagreed with the usual statement that male students plagiarize more often than females. However, Kaposi & Dell (2012) cited work by Thompson & Pennycook (2008) and Anson (2008), which questioned whether plagiarism’s relevance within the university setting was truly based on “political/ideological conviction,” rather than actual occurrence measures.

From this, one can see that a lack of a truly uniform way of studying this phenomenon makes it harder for researchers to get a true picture of the prevalence of plagiarism within universities. What likely is more important is for individual institutions to assess the amount of plagiarism regularly within their own universities so that they can measure the effectiveness of their intervention programs, such as honor codes, policies, and their responses to student incidences of plagiarism.

Universities’ and Instructors’ Lenses for Viewing Plagiarism
Faculty members’ perspectives on plagiarism affect their commitments to reduce plagiarism on college and university campuses. As one might expect, various individuals working in universities often view the problem with different perspectives or lenses.

*The ‘Plagiarism as an Enemy’ Lens*

The lens through which faculty view plagiarism contributes to how they handle situations of academic integrity and plagiarism. Some university faculty members tend to view plagiarism as an enemy, the way a farmer might view weeds in a garden and pluck each out one by one, or the way doctors detect a cancerous growth and set about to remove or destroy it. This approach supports the attitude that what is important is the detection of plagiarism and subsequent punishment. Vevillianen et al. (2017) underscored the variety of feelings faculty members often have about plagiarism when they cited Nevgi & Lofstrom (2014), who suggested that plagiarism “arouse[s] conflicting emotions and emotional reactions among academics” (Vevillianen et al., 2017, p. 2). Logically, various individuals’ feelings about plagiarism will range from frustration to shock, and in some cases, rage, while others view it with indifference, based on their value systems, prior experiences, or other underlying beliefs.

*The Avoidance Lens*

Scholars such as De Maio et al. (2019) believe a significant problem in preventing plagiarism is that it is not addressed consistently by all faculty within many universities, and that it often goes underreported. This situation may, in some cases, relate to the feelings of indifference some faculty feel about the issue, while, for others it may relate to viewing plagiarism within a lens of avoidance. De Maio et al described the views of a subgroup of faculty within their own study who felt that acts of student plagiarism were the student’s responsibility,
not theirs, underscoring that in cases like this, plagiarism acts may frequently go underreported. McDonald & Caroll (2006) also acknowledged how universities have relegated most of the responsibility involved in avoiding plagiarism to students. De Maio et al. (2019) concluded that inconsistent reporting plays a large role in the continued prevalence of plagiarism today. This underscores the fact that the participation of all stakeholders is needed to solve the problem of plagiarism in universities.

**The Shared Responsibility Lens**

Fortunately, in many universities, prevention of and dealing with plagiarism is now viewed as a shared responsibility among students, instructors, and educational institutions, as it should be (De Maio et al, 2019). I am convinced this is crucial because the stakes for all involved include (1) preserving institutional credibility, (2) maintaining the merit of conferred university degrees, (3) protecting the validity of scientific research, (Bejan, 2019), and also (4) properly supporting the future growth and integrity of students professionalism and ethics as they enter their professions, (De Maio et al., 2019). After all, a significant number of the students in school today will later be conducting the new research our society relies on. Good research requires accurate and ethical procedures.

What remains is that, although a lot of literature has been written about plagiarism over the past couple of decades, many instructors have still not yet determined the best way to deal with the problem in their own classrooms. In fact, there does not seem to be one single, unified approach that pulls everything together into a neat solution package, since the problem is so complex.

**How Universities Today Respond to Plagiarism**
A discussion of university responses to plagiarism would not be complete without explaining how universities arrive at their responses to student plagiarism. Many colleges and universities have come a long way in their approaches to prevention and pro-active responses, but there is still a lot more to be done before the problem can be effectively dealt with.

**Plagiarism Detection Software**

As a remedy for student plagiarism, universities today often purchase text-matching software such as Turnitin or SafeAssign and they often institute honor codes and policies to deter students from plagiarism. Studies such as that by Hunt & Tomkins (2014) have focused on methods of identifying plagiarism, particularly through programs like Turnitin or SafeAssign, which have gained a lot of approval in many universities. However, recent literature such as that by Slinkard (2011) and Bruton & Childers (2015) reveals that these methods are increasingly coming under fire from students as well as professors. Some scholars have stated that, under the wrong circumstances, they violate student privacy and intellectual property (Brinkman, 2013; Butakov et al., 2012). Some students also stated they had poor experiences with plagiarism detection software even when they did authentic work, which calls into question the effectiveness of such software to detect plagiarism (Slinkard, 2011). Sometimes the software may result in unfair penalties in certain cases; however, Bruton & Childers (2015) stated their findings that most of the time instructors in their study only penalized what they were certain was rampant intentional plagiarism. Inadvertent plagiarism was not treated with severe measures. Ultimately, they felt that the results of using detection software had less influence on those instructors’ behavior than their convictions about what types of plagiarism deserved sanctions.

Another observation, made by Morris & Stomell (2017), has recently gained traction, which states that the use of plagiarism software can result in the monetization of student data by
companies like Turnitin, and this results in violation of students’ intellectual property. This leads to the question of whether the use of plagiarism software like Turnitin is truly ethical at all, and if it victimizes the students who attend the universities who require it.

**University Mission Statements**

Academic integrity is often mentioned in mission statements for various universities. Bayrak (2019) pointed out that mission statements are (1) instrumental in driving institutional decision-making processes, (2) offer companies some direction in the pursuit of their goals, (3) offer some information about the culture and environment that exists within the institution, and (4) are an attempt to control that environment. (Bayrak, 2019). For example, when a university includes academic honesty requirements in a mission statement, it shows that the faculty (part of the environment) and the administrators (another part of the environment) expect academic honesty, setting a clear boundary for students regarding what behavior the institution will accept or reject. Mission statements prescribe boundaries for all stakeholders within an institution (Bayrak, 2019). This is one important means that many universities currently use to discourage plagiarism. The most obvious and practical reason academic integrity is crucial to the mission of post-secondary institutions is that universities and colleges have a responsibility to prepare students for future ethical and professional choices they will make once they graduate. Smith (2008) cited the work of Nonis and Swift (2001), whose case study findings showed that behavior in university settings is often followed by unethical behavior in future work settings, and McDonald & Carrol (2006) mentioned that students who do not demonstrate ethics, can reflect poorly on the university they attended. This is another good reason administrators and instructors must consider how integrity and ethics can be ingrained throughout a student’s
university experience to prevent plagiarism as well as support students in their future professional roles (McDonald & Caroll, 2006).

**Institutional Honor Codes**

One thing that helps establish an understanding of any university’s ethical expectations is the use of institutional honor codes. Prohaska (2013) cited research by McCabe et al., (2001); Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, (2001) who claimed that institutional honor codes can help prevent dishonesty among students. They also noted that peer behavior can influence other students. An important conclusion to Whitley & Keith-Spiegel’s work was that supporting ethical behavior includes creating a classroom environment that encourages students to value academic integrity. Furthermore, Scanlan (2006) stated that honor codes alone do not prevent plagiarism, and that what is needed is a more thorough strategy, one that combines prevention strategies with penalties.

**Strict Ethics vs. Care Ethics Approach**

Many universities have traditionally tended toward dealing with plagiarism in what Francois (2019) called a *moral vacuum*. This is a context in which faculty responses to plagiarism focus on seeking out and punishing plagiarism acts because they indicate unethical behavior rather than understanding them in context. However, research by Power (2009) indicated that it is a common truth that many students who choose not to plagiarize do so because of fear, and to avoid punishment, not because it is immoral or unethical to do so. Others stated that they did not plagiarize because it was easier to do the assignment instead.

Kaposi & Dell (2012) acknowledged four fundamental theories about plagiarism prevalent within universities at that time, including (a) the moralist, (b) proceduralist, (c)
developmental, and (d) intertextual theories. However, he stated that even the procedural and developmental approaches were somewhat underpinned by assumptions about the student’s honesty, which, in turn, is also a statement about their ethics.

The strict ethical approach all but ignores students’ direct experiences, their needs as learners, and the underlying gaps in understanding of paraphrasing and source attribution that could be causing inadvertent plagiarism. More recently, some universities are responding to plagiarism with a different approach that, while still putting ethics in the foreground, is more student-centered. This is called the care ethical approach. Instead of seeking and punishing plagiarism, the goal is to remediate student misunderstandings that result in plagiarism. During this type of correction, it is easy to see how faculty would be able to also delve into students’ situational factors and motivations.

**Holistic Institutional Lens**

Interestingly, McDonald & Carroll (2006) suggested that students do not view plagiarism the same way as scholars and instructors, stating that many students do not see it as a particularly significant issue. They also felt that plagiarism was then being dealt with through simple approaches that could not possibly solve the problem. Francois (2011) and McDonald and Carroll (2007) both recommended a holistic institutional approach, one that increases plagiarism education opportunities for students all around the university, not just in the writing classroom, or in policy statements. Instead, this approach creates a larger role for academic integrity within the university context with embedded references to it within the total university environment. This seems like a wise suggestion in that it could at least put academic integrity at the forefront of student’s minds as they are present within the environment.
Francois, who also favored a holistic approach, pointed out that seeking out and punishing plagiarism seems more retributive than helpful, and he decried the fact that students are expected to learn not to plagiarize ‘on the fly” without the support of the type of “robust writing pedagogy” they need to become successful academic writers. (para 2, lines 14-17).

Choo and Megan (2013), a third proponent of a holistic approach, pointed out that the expectations of post-secondary institutions for students ought to match more evenly with the amount of training students receive in documentation. They also questioned whether some staff members are prepared and skilled enough to provide the kind of training students need, particularly in terms of cultural considerations. They felt that this matter needs to be resolved for students to improve their skill at avoiding plagiarism, referring also to the work of Pearson and Gallagher, (1983) who developed a method called the graduate release model.

Choo and Megan approved of this model, which promoted training students in proper source documentation by using guided writing practice, but subsequently, advised a gradual release into autonomous documentation. Choo and Megan subsequently offered a plagiarism-prevention framework that combined (a) staff education on cultural differences, (b) instructing students in documentation, (c) facilitating both instructors’ and students’ use of plagiarism detection software, (d) careful, well-overseen compliance with policy, and (e) taking a renewed look at methods of assessing plagiarism (p. 295)

Miller (2014) did a study on the effects of a plagiarism education program on college students’ knowledge sometime between 2008 and 2011. The first course the researchers developed was called Plagiarism Awareness Program Course (online). The second course was an online version of the course, called Plagiarism Avoidance for New Students (librarian-facilitated). It was a new, improved version of the first course, which three thousand other
students took between October and December 2012. The outcome of both courses revealed similar data, but both indicated that a high percent of students within each of the courses improved in their understanding of what acts constitute plagiarism, based on their scores. The results were better (93% scored 70 or more) for those who attended the librarian-facilitated version, and those who attended an online version (85% scored 70 or more). The study also was followed by an actual reduction in reports of plagiarism on campus. Miller concluded that this type of direct education is needed to help students understand plagiarism and avoid it effectively in college and university papers.

The Need for a Better Approach

Though many universities continue to focus on identification and policing plagiarism, and many have also introduced honor codes and other practical ways to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism, complexity theory states that complex problems often remain unsolved in the face of singular solutions. Turner and Baker (2019) stated the following:

Complexity science expands on the reductionistic framework by not only understanding the parts that contribute to the whole but by understanding how each part interacts with all the other parts and emerges into a new entity, thus having a more comprehensive and complete understanding of the whole (p. 2).

Turner and Baker’s reference to complex adaptive systems and applications to educational institutions underscored that they are also dynamic, environmentally interactive, and self-organizing (p. 22). They assert that complex adaptive systems “scan and sense the external environment and then make internal adjustments and developments in order to meet the demands of the changing external environment” (p.22). If one applies this to student plagiarism, he/she can imagine plagiarism as functioning within a system in which students’ plagiarize so that they
can adapt to various course demands and still accomplish other goals, some of which involve unrelated social goals. In these situations, the cost-benefit ratio of doing the work of authentic academic writing vs the risk of getting caught plagiarizing (Woessner, 2004) will, no doubt, weigh in with these other priorities when students make decisions about these things. Jones (2019) called attention to the fact that students, even in the classroom, have social goals above and beyond the academic ones that teachers expect them to accomplish. Hence, the real problem, in too many cases, could be that the outcome of a less-academically-motivated student’s decision-making process could depend on his/her goals as well as which is more difficult, to do authentic work or to plagiarize.

Universities need a systems-based or complexity-based approach that will eliminate most, if not all, of the situational factors that contribute to the plagiarism problem. This handbook is an attempt to both offer some ways universities can deal with the system that plagiarism operates within and offer instructors ways to improve the learning culture so that student plagiarism can largely become a thing of the past.

**Contributors to Plagiarism**

*Technology, Modern Society, and Plagiarism*

Several scholars believe that the increase over the past couple of decades in plagiarism relates to changes in society. Further complicating the situation is that some students do not consider borrowing of source material unethical (Murdock & Stephens, 2007). A great deal of scholars have blamed the easy access of the internet and copy and paste technology for rises in plagiarism behavior among students (Sprajc, et al, 2003; Comas-Forgas and Sureda-Negre, 2010; De Maio et al., 2019).
Online Learning Environments

The progress of technology made plagiarism easier through copy and paste, but it also led to the advent of online classes, which afford more privacy to students during their study, and do not offer the same rich social benefits of an in-person classroom in spite of attempts to mediate that problem. Furthermore, changes in the external environment, such as Covid-19, are driving more educational institutions to move to online platforms. How this will affect plagiarism behavior remains to be seen. Eventually, it is expected that teaching will resume within brick-n-mortar universities, and when it does, everyone needs to be prepared for smaller classes. Perhaps, there is hope that with smaller groups of students, instructors may be able to transform the environment that writing practice takes place within, giving more direct one-on-one guidance.

Societal Changes in Language

As the above passages have pointed out, societal change can be a hindrance to education as well as a benefit. Scholars, such as McWhorter (2003), have even gone as far as to suggest that the articulate use of language has diminished in American society. Though he did not connect this with the act of plagiarism, his viewpoint implies that when articulate oral language diminishes in a society, written language likely suffers as well. Since academic writing is a genre that involves certain types of rhetoric, diction, and language structures, some students may be entering university programs less prepared for academic writing than they need to be. Recent work done by Zepke (2013) corroborated statements by earlier authors like Meyer and Land (2003) that preparation to learn academic writing is not solely based on core concepts but also on threshold concepts that can ‘…transform learners’ view of the content ‘(p. 98). This is
something that instructors need to be mindful of when they teach academic writing, so that they can help these students better grasp the genre.

**Intertextuality and The Remix Culture**

Another important consideration for writing instructors trying to prevent plagiarism is that we live in a *remix culture*, one in which derivative works are often copied but given a fresh perspective, creating a brand-new work. (Murray, 2015). This type of culture was developed due to the ease with which one can copy, paste, alter, and disseminate source materials, not limited to writing, but also other media. Many classes are now including multimodal presentations which require students to combine writing with media, leading to a different approach to creation (Hafner, 2015). Share (2004-2014) presented a peer-reviewed paper on managing intertextuality to the International Integrity Plagiarism Conference between 2004 and 2014, in which he connected academic intertextuality with the modern cultural environment we all participate in now, one in which we can replicate and recirculate images and texts at will. He connected this also with how this is done within other arts such as literature, fashion, and music.

Thus, students may come into the university with a perspective assuming that remix is acceptable in a similar way during academic writing. This underscores that the larger environment of our society may complicate student’s understanding of plagiarism.

**Student Time-Management and Social Obligations**

Comas-Forgas and Sureda-Negre (2010) noted poor student time-management as considerable factor in the reasons why students intentionally or unintentionally plagiarize assignments. Social or work obligations impinge upon students’ time to learn and practice accurate source documentation in writing academic papers. Older students may have more
family and work obligations which complicate their writing efforts. Young students may have more social temptations to navigate, particularly within brick-n-mortar universities that encourage students to join sororities and fraternities within their institution.

**Students’ Personal Needs, Moral Reasoning, and Ethical Behavior**

As human beings who are self-governing, students will sometimes put their personal ‘needs’ ahead of ethics. For example, when faced with the choice of missing out on an important social event, or in the face of work obligations, a student’s moral reasoning may or may not win out, leading to ethical behavioral choices (Murdock & Stephens, 2007). This problem, however, is not just related to unethical behavior choices but also to the student’s ingrained habits of mind, something which will be discussed later in this thesis.

**Gains-to-Loss, Risks, and Their Effect on Plagiarism**

Another line of reasoning states that some students may assess the gains-to-loss risks in their decision to plagiarize. This is particularly true if the risk of getting caught seems low (Woessner, 2004). Clearly, requiring student accountability to show their writing process is quite important to deter plagiarism. This is a major part of adapting the classroom and university environment to make plagiarism less beneficial to students who try to avoid doing the work involved in creating authentic academic prose.

**Deficits in Authorial Identity**

**Abasi et al (2006) Study**

Abasi et al (2006) studied a psychological factor, authorial identity, among ESL students, pointed to it as an alternative explanation for student plagiarism, and claiming that if a
student cannot envision himself as an author, their voice or unique perspectives may be missing from writing assignments (Abasi, et al, 2006, p. 118). Abasi et al also cited the work of Howard (2000) who made a distinction between plagiarism, which she considered an intentional act, such as purchasing or borrowing a paper, from *problematic intertextuality*, a type of inadvertent plagiarism based on the reuse of ideas originated within older written works.

**Chandrasoma et al. (2004) study**

Abasi et al. (2006) also referred to work done by Chandrasoma et al (2004), who concluded was that it will take more than simply identifying and preventing plagiarism or teaching students how to cite sources correctly because of the deep connection that is developing between intertextuality and identity, knowledge, education, and language (p. 172). They also stated that it makes sense to view *apparent plagiarism* as an expected part of the student writer’s learning process, which is developmental in nature, rather than construing it as a moral infraction (pp. 173-4). Furthermore, Chandrasoma went on to suggest that the scientific and teaching community begin to think in terms of “transgressive” and “nontransgressive intertextuality” instead of continuing to embrace the plagiarism concept, because they felt it would be more empowering and constructive (Chandrasoma, 2004, p. 171).

**Pittam et al. Studies**

Pittam et al (2009) revisited the work of Abasi, et al, but delved somewhat deeper by classifying students’ direct beliefs and attitudes about authorship. Pittam et al. found that if a student was highly interested in a specific writing topic, this translated positively to scores of his/her authorial identity. They also noted that some students scored greater if they were responsible for collecting data during a research project (p. 156). These results suggest that when
students feel high engagement with a topic, or have had prior experience with it, this can contribute to positive authorial identity. In contrast, the study also revealed that some students’ authorial identity was hindered by mental conflicts with thinking of themselves as authors. They experienced cognitive dissonance when imagining themselves as authors because authors are perceived “on a pedestal” in society. Another type of student experienced a different type of mental conflict, wondering whether to feel like an author or like an editor during academic writing assignments. One practical application for this finding would be if instructors could consider how to transform students’ authorial identity simply by adjusting the design of assignments. This could be accomplished by placing focus on novel contributions within students’ work.

**Authorial Identity and Writing Experience**

Pittam et al noted that the undergraduates who had already progressed into their second year of undergraduate work seemed to have an improved sense of authorial identity over those who were just beginning their undergraduate education (p. 156). This could be related to further practice and instruction. One of the most interesting findings from this study was that the fear of accidental plagiarism seemed to stem from “underdeveloped authorial identities,” and this type of underdeveloped identity seemed to be connected to “surface approaches to learning” (p. 159).

**Concluding Remarks on Authorial Identity.** Regardless of the chosen factors for measuring authorial identity and the type of scale used in the process, authorial identity is well supported as an essential factor in the amelioration of student plagiarism. This makes it critical for college and university instructors to adjust assignments and use teaching methods that support authorial identity, but it is important to keep in mind that one of the biggest keys to establishing positive authorial identity is writing practice.
Knowledge of When to Paraphrase vs. Directly Quote Sources

Another concern expressed by students during Pittam’s study was a fear of losing or changing some of a source’s intention by paraphrasing. This is, no doubt, why many students overuse direct quotes. For example, one student in Pittam et al.’s study stated he/she used this method of citing information to avoid plagiarizing (Pittam et al, 2009). Therefore, instructors should clarify what types of passages are better quoted and which are better put into the student’s own words.

Time Constraints and Focused Assignments

Some secondary undergraduate students in the Pittam et al study expressed that the duration of time they are given to do some assignments is insufficient at best, and that the topics they are given to write about are a little too broad. They complained that the two weeks they are given to examine sources and to write about them for these assignments do not allow them the opportunity to comprehend all of their source material plus translate the information into their own words. Thus, these students pointed to a need or desire for more focused assignments. This problem was later addressed in Glenn and Goldwaite (2008), whose work is discussed later in this chapter.

The Need for More Training in Referencing in Citation

Pittam et al. underscored the problems in traditional university responses to plagiarism, referring to work by Ashworth et al. (2006), which during a student interview study found that students have an unbalanced attitude toward plagiarism, fearing it too much or being nonchalant about it, and confusion about what specific behavior qualifies as plagiarism. Most importantly, as Pittam et al pointed out, a focus on plagiarism detection and on honor codes overlooks many
aspects of the plagiarism problem, and that even as students move into the second undergraduate year and beyond, they still often struggle with referencing and citation. A more direct intervention for this would take account of various contributors to the problem.

The Importance of Instituting a Set Day for Student Help

One U.S. student responding during the Pittam et al study felt that the environment set within his own school district, i.e. classes throughout grade school, high school, and college, had greatly improved his ability to navigate written assignments without plagiarizing. He/she stated that during those classes, instructors and teachers walked students through the process of source attribution, which enhanced students’ experiences. This student went on to say that, in those classes, students were given a set day to bring their references into class. It was clear this gave him/her a sense of security about being able to avoid plagiarism. However, not all classes, even in the U.S., provide this sort of opportunity. Many universities and high school classrooms do not provide this type of detailed and tailored approach.

Classroom Culture, Assignments, and Plagiarism

The culture within classrooms is integral to supporting students’ development and mastery of academic writing. Smith (2008) pointed out some ways that the classroom environment can be improved in ways that will reduce the motivation for students to plagiarize in assignments.

Positive classroom culture

It goes without saying that students need a classroom culture in which the instructor values each student and their contributions. Dallalfar et al (2011) pointed out the importance of an inclusive approach to the classroom. They also stated that
“…the classroom is not simply an enclosed space in which teachers and students interact over what is in the formal curriculum, but it is also a deeply public, civic space in which all participants develop important critical, moral, and political understandings and practice them through their dialogue and cooperation,” (p. 214).

Thus, instructors should demonstrate enthusiasm, empathy, and an attitude of inclusion within the classroom. This can be done effectively, whether it is an in-person or virtual classroom environment. Establishing a positive classroom culture will likely make students more comfortable with self-expression, something which is important as students share their academic writing attempts. In this type of positive environment where students are rewarded for interacting authentically, it will be easier for them to be vulnerable, ask questions, and to feel like part of a learning community. In keeping with this, Hourigan (2013) called attention to how important it is for students to feel like a part of a learning community rather than feeling detached or ignored. This knowledge prompted her to create a learning model called ARC, which involves making connections between the material being learned and events or situations the student has experienced, as well as using reflection assignments and collaboration with other learners to learn where one needs to improve his/her learning.

Other crucial aspects of classroom culture include whether material in the classroom has the potential to help students accomplish future goals, and whether the focus is on competing, (e.g. for grades or recognition), or if it is on the value of the material and learning for its own sake. Moss et al (2017) stated that, in their study, students who plagiarized tended to be those that focused too much on competition.
Assignment Types, Dates, and Classroom Discussions of Plagiarism

Aasheim et al (2012) sought to discover more about how assignment types might affect students’ willingness to plagiarize. They noted that students’ attitudes about plagiarism behaviors and their acceptability varied between different types of assignments students undertook during the study. They compared student attitudes toward plagiarism within computer programming assignments, essay assignments, and math assignments. The results suggested to them that students felt more conflict concerning plagiarism in writing essays than on math or computer programming assignments.

The study also found that classroom discussions about academic honesty tended to improve student attitudes toward the inappropriateness of plagiarism but did not show whether this made any changes in students’ behavior. This result may suggest that longitudinal studies are needed to help shed light on how education about academic honesty contributes to long-term academic integrity.

Karon (2012) suggested that teachers teach students about responsible scholarship as well as plagiarism by using a special lesson to teach student’s directly about plagiarism instead of just making it a side topic. Her method involved using an assignment in which students researched, read, and took notes from articles by a few different plagiarism experts that she specified in the assignment. Afterward, the students were to download an essay from a paper mill cite and critique its positive and negative ones. She went on to say that this activity lets the students know that she is aware of the existence and location of paper mills, and it also lets the students know that papers they might purchase are often not even as well-done as their own would be.
More recently, attention is being brought to how teachers and students can work together to create assignments that make learning more personalized. One type of personalized learning experience is one called *combination learning*. Heick (2017) explains that this type of learning puts together more than one learning element, involves a greater focus on the process, and also includes student input, since they get to choose some of the features of their learning project’s design. They also note that students are required in this situation to be accountable for their own achievements and progress. The teacher is less directive and mostly functions on the sidelines as a guide (Heick, 2017). Hale (2018) claimed that one good way to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism in assignments is to incorporate visual components such as poster board assignments, mind maps, cartoons, or giving students the chance to create storyboards or ad campaigns.

**Product-Oriented Focus vs. Process-Focused Focus (Grades)**

Attitudes toward academic writing are sometimes subtly supported by (1) the ways instructors describe the writing process, (2) their methods of grading, and (3) the ways various assignments are designed. A process-oriented focus within the classroom emphasizes the steps involved in writing a paper rather than writing to simply produce a written product.

Larger assignments can be broken into several smaller ones that encourage this focus. Though a lot of instructors do use the classic descriptions of individual parts of the writing process to help students realize that writing is not just about producing a final written product, sometimes larger products or projects that receive high point values can inherently undermine this by making it seem to students that what really matters is doing well on that one project. (McDonald & Caroll, 2007).

**Low stakes vs. High-Stakes Assignments**
A beneficial meso strategy that instructors can use in their classrooms is that of assigning low-stakes assignments. This is because classroom environments not only involve the culture and instruction strategies but also the length and difficulty of the assignments given by instructors. Low-stakes assignments can help deter students from the decision to plagiarize. This is because the tasks do not carry a high point value, and each one counts incrementally toward the course grade. Smaller assignments allow students the opportunity to practice source documentation over a length of time, giving them multiple opportunities to succeed. Increased opportunities for success may reduce students’ temptation to plagiarize to pass their courses, since one assignment would not have such a large impact on their grade.

Smith (2008) cited the support of Knight (2001) who stated that (1) low-stakes assignments are more likely to lead to students’ being honest about their knowledge gaps while high-stakes ones create motivations for students to hide their shortcomings, leading to more temptation to plagiarize, and (2) low-stake assignments do not lead to course failure, since they are parts of incremental steps in a learning process. It is easy to envision low-stakes assignments as an effective way to circumvent plagiarism. Smith goes on to say that by using low-stake assignments, not only does it reduce the need for students to plagiarize, but the instructor can also discover the students who need more support and help through the writing process.

Assignment Topics

Glenn & Goldthwaite (2008), the authors of the St. Martin’s Guide to Teaching Writing, advocated for preventing plagiarism by assignment design, as well as by teaching students how to responsibly cite sources. They suggested avoiding topics that are easy to answer just by consulting online sources, and, instead, constructing assignments that are more difficult to plagiarize in the first place. Glenn & Goldthwaite further advised teachers to use topics that
students must “personalize” as they write about them (p. 85). They also suggested what kinds of assignments not to use, including an admonition to avoid giving assignments that require too much prior knowledge about the topic, since it can sometimes cause students to become entrenched in too much reading and research prior to writing about it (p. 100). This suggestion could be applied to plagiarism prevention strategies in that some students likely plagiarize because of poor time management or poor work/life balance.

Assignment Sequence

Glenn & Goldwaite described how instructors should go about sequencing assignments to help students learn various types of discourse. Basing this on the sequence of Alexander Bain, who categorized academic writing discourse into four types, “narration, description, exposition, and argumentation” (p. 90), they suggested that first assignments within writing courses should involve narration and description, since they are more concrete and allow students to use their experiential knowledge and subject content, but exposition and argumentation should be reserved for later assignments since they require understanding and manipulation of abstract concepts., and they have a persuasive purpose (Glenn & Goldwaite, 2008)

Assignment Due Dates

Something else that instructors will want to consider as they determine how to reduce the likelihood of student plagiarism is the timing of assignment due dates. If multiple instructors within a degree program assign the same due dates for multiple assignments, this could figure into students’ motivations to relieve their assignment workload. With a greater workload than a student can reasonably handle, common sense says there would be more likelihood of students resorting to plagiarism than if they have sufficient time between various assignment due dates.
Assignment Directions

As well, if assignment directions are not clear and well-expressed, this can indirectly lead to plagiarism as some lower-performing students may be tempted to take shortcuts. If a student is confused about the expectations for an assignment, it would naturally make the temptation for the student to plagiarize greater if the opportunity arises, since one of the reasons research has shown for intentional plagiarism is motivation to avoid a poor grade on a written assignment.

Required Writing Process Artifacts

Another important suggestion Glenn & Goldwaite offered was making sure students go through several revisions of their drafts, and that they turn in all their early ones (p. 85). Doing this requires students to show some direct evidence of their writing process, making plagiarism somewhat more difficult. This is not a failsafe, however, as some students may still try to get away with plagiarism under these circumstances. For example, if a student purchases a paper written by a friend, he or she might ask that person for their writing process documents. However, the requirement of producing artifacts from their writing process would makes the situation more complicated for them, and if this were coupled with the instructor requiring micro-assignments and reflection assignments about their writing and citation process scattered throughout the class term, this could be a powerful way to deter intentional plagiarism.

Practical Exercises Needed to Support Students’ Confidence

The authors of a recent study of the effectiveness of various educational policy and interventions to encourage greater research integrity, including the reduction of plagiarism, stated the following in a cautious tone:
Overall, there is very low-quality evidence that various methods of training in research integrity had some effects on participants' attitudes to ethical issues but minimal (or short-lived) effects on their knowledge. Training about plagiarism and paraphrasing had varying effects on participants' attitudes towards plagiarism and their confidence in avoiding it, but training that included practical exercises appeared to be more effective. (Marusic, et al., 2016, para 6)

These statements seem to indicate that training which includes practice is more effective and should logically be an integral part of any multidimensional approach to teaching source attribution. Students likely would become more successful with source attribution if given more opportunity for extended practice.

The Need for Instructor-Guided Writing Practice

Coffman et al (2017) studied the use of guided writing practice during undergraduate lab geoscience courses. Their methods were based on active learning strategies and guiding students in how to use proper scientific argumentation, and included the use of inquiry-based writing, reflection, and forming a hypothesis, and supporting it with evidence (p. 231). The findings of their study showed that this method resulted in high student engagement and considerable improvements to both their composition skills and their overall learning experience (p. 231).

Even without considering the outcome of the above study, most can agree that guided practice is a crucial part of the development of successful academic writing. However, in real college and university classrooms, what takes precedence is lecture time. In fact, a great deal of students’ time is spent listening to instructor’s lectures rather than engaging in actual writing.
Hall (2015) called attention to the ways that composing in a shared space, such as a classroom or a writing lab, contributes to the writing experience, particularly in terms of its “participatory” context. Not only can students get writing practice under either of these conditions, but they have an opportunity to interact and share perspectives within that meso environment. Hall pointed out that doing so can contribute to positive identity, which one can intuit would contribute to student writing engagement.

In relation to this, modern educational strategy has already begun to address the importance of teaching students how to work with others, so this could be an added benefit to the situation if students were allowed during writing projects to work in the classroom and share perspectives and offer peer support during their writing projects, since this would be done within a proctored situation where inappropriate sharing or copying could likely be prevented.

**Students’ Use of the University Writing Center for Guided Practice**

When considering the best context for guided writing practice, it is important for instructors and tutors to be familiar with how students’ feel when sharing and talking with a stranger about a piece of writing we have written. Working with students in this context requires sensitivity to their feelings about sharing their writing with other people who they do not know. In a study which mentioned the discomfort students sometimes feel sharing their writing, Fry et al. (2017) included a discussion of graduate student’s discomforts in making writing center appointments, noting that these students’ inhibitions were prompted by fears of what Fry called “going public with their writing” (pp. 2832-2833).

One problem with universities’ reliance on writing centers and after-hour office visits with instructors is that students must voluntarily seek the services. One can imagine this could be quite a hurdle for some introverted students to cross, and it also does not replicate the context
students are already accustomed to within the classroom environment, one in which attention is divided and not focused solely on one student writer and his/her writing mistakes.

When I worked as an undergraduate writing consultant for the University of Mississippi Writing Center, our group of tutors discussed ways to ease the discomfort some students may feel about coming to the writing center for help. During this training, our supervisor, Dr. Rachel Johnson, pointed out that some students believe going to the writing center will make them appear to be a remedial student. Subsequently, she explained some ways we could go about helping students feel more comfortable. However, there is no way that tutors can get do this unless students first make the choice to take the risk of sharing their writing with a stranger, (or, in some cases, with one of the consultants they already know.

In relation to the topic of students’ choices and their visits to the writing center, Salem (2016) delved into how social constructs and beliefs affect students’ choices to visit or avoid on-campus writing centers. She felt that some students have developed a negative vision of the writing center based on the fact that so many instructors have mandated visits to the writing center, making it seem like a place designed for use by those with writing deficiencies, instead of one where all writers can go to receive feedback and improvement. Sadly, she also believed that this view of writing centers is difficult to change, even though most go to a great deal of effort to give a strong message that they are not remedial in nature.

This supports how important it is to note that students participate within a larger university environment where meaning is constructed. Meaning is not constructed in just one location within the university. Naturally, the remedy for this is to get all university faculty to align in pursuit of helping students navigate any hindrances to their academic writing success, so that they will be less predisposed to seek the easy way out through plagiarism.
The Need for a Qualified Instructor During Guided Writing Practice

Another problem with writing practice or help that takes place solely outside of the classroom is that even if students do use the writing center for this purpose, writing center tutors do not have the same type or level of training as instructors, though they can be great coaches and they offer an invaluable, peer-level type of support. Truly, there really is no comparable replacement for guided writing practice with an instructor. This is a gap that universities need to address so that more students can begin to master information literacy, critical thinking, proper research-based argumentation, and correct source attribution. Madison College Libraries, (2020) labeled information literacy as something all human beings are entitled to because we now live in a world in which access to knowledge is based the ability to use online information effectively.

Student Learners Construct Their Own Understanding of Plagiarism

Though universities offer definitions for plagiarism online, and teachers offer a textbook-style definition or even detailed explanation of what plagiarism means, the learning theory of constructivism makes it clear that learners construct their own meaning as they do educational activities, (Sierfert, 2015), something which LaMort, (2019a) referred to as experiential learning which happens through the writing of a large paper or a few different shorter ones during the same course. Without enough guidance in correct use and citation of sources, some students are bound to falter. McCord (2008) pointed out that anyone can and sometimes may unintentionally misappropriate information, noting how even if the act is unintentional, universities often reserve the right to treat it with the same penalties. McCord’s ultimate recommendation was that
instructors help students avoid plagiarism by creating and using assignments designed specifically to circumvent student plagiarism (McCord, 2008).

**Current Plagiarism Deterrence Methods**

Universities have identification and plagiarism detection resources at their disposal as well as policies and honor codes. It is important to understand the advantages as well as the limitations of those in dealing with student plagiarism, as well as to realize how harsh penalties can create problems.

**Benefits and Disadvantages to Detection and Penalty Strategies**

Several studies touted the benefits of using software detection programs like Turnitin and SafeAssign (Han & Thompson, 2014; Graham-Mathison & Starr, 2013; Heckler et al, 2014). Traditionally, universities have stated policies that recommend severe penalties whether the plagiarism was intentional or inadvertent. Whether they are applied in the same way they are stated is another matter. (Hunt & Thompkins, 2014; Kaktins, 2019; Royce, 2003). The penalties can range from mild to severe, from receiving a failing grade for the assignment, for the course, or even to expulsion in some cases. However, one problem with harsh penalties is that some students do not intentionally plagiarize. They simply not fully understand how to apply correct source attribution so that they can avoid it, and some of those students may also suffer from learning deficits, which makes the matter even more complex.

Another problem with Turnitin and other software identification programs is that some students have been determined to be plagiarists yet were not actually guilty. I found a few examples of this on Quora, in which students recounted being falsely accused of plagiarism based on plagiarism software or on a teacher’s misunderstanding. These students shared the
trauma that resulted for them after the accusation. This is, no doubt, something that universities should take more into consideration when they establish plagiarism policies. Harsh penalties are unfair to students who are victims of false positives. A more satisfactory and appropriate punishment for plagiarism might be if the student was required to redo the assignment that was plagiarized, as well as to take a grade cut.

To fulfill common university mission statements that describe the desire to foster student learning, I believe responses to plagiarism should always be focused correctively moreso than punitively. Students who plagiarize likely are fueled by a negative view of the university environment and the expectations required of them, so it seems important to improve these students’ perspectives on learning and university study rather than create more resentment, negativity, and motives to attack the university’s reputation with their outside circles of influence. More effective than punishing certain behaviors are the methods universities use to adjust the environment. Thus, a key solution to the plagiarism problem is for universities to make plagiarism less appealing while making authentic academic writing much more rewarding by comparison.

**Student Adaptation to Detection Methods**

Instructors and administrators should keep in mind that even through universities now have detection methods like Turnitin and SafeAssign, students who intentionally plagiarize can still adapt their strategies. They can get away with plagiarism by avoiding the use of articles that are in online databases, reducing the chance that plagiarism would be recognized through the software. For example, in an online forum a student started on how to get away with plagiarism, individuals offered advice to one another on how to get away with plagiarism. One person’s advice was to use older sources that are not available online for sources, such as, for example,
dated library books. (Ryan, 2018). The fact that students are having these types of discussions in online forums reveals how some students are upgrading their methods to try to get away with plagiarism, making it urgent now for policy-makers to consider ways to design the learning environment to be more plagiarism-proof, but that also includes creating a cultural environment that makes students want to do authentic work. Environments which do not require further proofs of student engagement in the writing process make it easier for students to intentionally plagiarize.

**Contributors to Inadvertent Plagiarism**

Inadvertent plagiarism is a whole different type of plagiarism than intentional plagiarism. It is based directly on developmental learning and knowledge about how to properly document sources. Hence, it has been researched and focused on separately by some researchers. A considerable amount of literature has been written on it. Some things that likely cause unintentional acts of plagiarism include student writing difficulties, unclear plagiarism definitions, cultural barriers, and ignorance of academic writing conventions,

**Student Writing Difficulties**

Student writing difficulties can make academic writing seem complex and difficult to navigate. If a student is already having difficulty mastering basic paragraphing, draft organization, grammar, and/or writing formats, this could complicate the process of documentation as well and make it seem like a difficult maze. Some students do not enter the university environment with adequate understandings of academic genre vocabulary, the academic genre register (tone, sentence structure, and so forth) to write effectively in the genre, (Coxhead, A. & Bird, P., 2007), which may, in turn, lead to frustration with writing assignments.
When a student’s focus is just on making it through a writing assignment, and barely understands the format being used, it is easy to see how he or she could make mistakes also in documentation.

**Inadequate Definitions of Plagiarism and Distinctive Terms**

During my preliminary research for this project, I looked at various universities’ ways of defining plagiarism. I found that the term is defined in different ways in the academic world, but also that there are a lot of commonalities in various descriptions. Acts of plagiarism need to be defined well but even with good definitions, there will sometimes be areas students have questions about.

According to Roberts (2008), Harvard University Extension School’s definition of plagiarism is “the theft of someone’s ideas and work whether a student copies verbatim or simply rephrases the ideas of another without properly acknowledging the source, the theft is the same,” (page 2, para 2). In his book, Roberts distinguished this from the University of Melbourne ‘s definition plagiarism, which is “the aspect of representing as one’s own original work the creative works of another, without appropriate acknowledgement of the author or source,” (page 2, para 1.)

From the above examples, one can observe that, though definitions are frequently quite similar, they also are subtly distinctive. The distinction in many cases is one of words and their emphasis, but emphasis does matter when it comes to anyone’s interpretation of a term or a definition. The best definitions always include examples. Adam et al (2017) pointed out that plagiarism is a social construct that is quite difficult to define, but I believe this is due to its complex nature and the fact that there are so many ways one can plagiarize, not just one or two.
Truly, the way educational institutions define plagiarism and the acts that constitute it is integral to students’ understanding of how to avoid it, but even more important is direct guidance by a more knowledgeable person concerning areas where students are unsure. Adam, et al (2017) posed that the inherent problems with the definition are significant enough to affect students’ performance during the academic writing process.

Interestingly, Adams et al claims there is no ‘standard definition’ of the term, and that plagiarism is not a real thing, but rather a construct related to academic discourse. (para 3). Gullifer & Tyson (2013) proposed that the term plagiarism can be interpreted in so many ways that this can be confusing to students, resulting in trepidation of transgressing the rules and being accused of plagiarism even though trying to use proper documentation.

Plagiarism Policies Are Not Always Read by Students

Another problem with policies is that, in many cases, students do not actually read the information even if it is available. This type of intervention depends on students to take this upon themselves. Likely, this is the reason why some universities have implemented honor codes and academic integrity questionnaires and contracts.

Cultural Barriers

In the case of some students, there are cultural and language barriers that relate to the plagiarism problem (Zobel & Hamilton, 2002). This is particularly true for L2 English learners. Researchers such as James, et al (2017) and Simon (2019) did studies concerning these types of barriers. James, et al discussed behaviors and motivations of Chinese students who self-reported plagiarism. They reported several different factors, among those being one that students who believed in “imitation of experts” during learning experiences and also that there is a ‘standard
answer’ that is the “correct” one. Some also expressed shame about their deficits in English writing (p. 631). Simon (2019) addressed several assumptions about the motivations for plagiarism within non-American cultures, and pointed out that in some cultures, the high pressure to meet expected societal standards can sometimes impede creativity and independent thinking.

**Clarifying the Meaning of Plagiarism Within the Classroom**

It seems that an important ingredient in trying to help students understand plagiarism is to take a bit more systematic approach to teaching it in the classroom, since students often struggle to overcome many barriers to understanding. Many instructors take time to explain plagiarism within their classrooms near the beginning of the term, but this is not always an open discussion where students contribute. Universities today use their websites to post their policies, mission statements, and definitions of plagiarism behavior as well as the penalties the university stands by. What clearly is needed, though, is an approach that helps students fully understand correct vs. incorrect source attribution as well as learn the mental habits and values to promote academic integrity and the pursuit of knowledge.

**Plagiarism as a Mistake in Applying Knowledge**

As far as penalties for plagiarism are concerned, an important fact Gullifer and Tyson pointed out is that all the aspects of academic writing are subject-based knowledge. If one considers this, it calls into question the case for penalizing inadvertent plagiarism. Since inadvertent plagiarism seems a mistake in applying or understanding academic knowledge, it also stands to reason that it does not truly fit into a matter of faulty ethics. Another term for this type of academic transgression than plagiarism seems in order.
**Cultural Differences, Limited Understanding, and Gray Areas**

James, et al (2017) called attention to a conflict that occurs due to a difference between the U.S. view of plagiarism and that of the countries they originate from. According to James et al, plagiarism is not a universal concept all cultures can agree on. There are many students attending U.S. universities who come from countries that have quite a different view of source appropriation from the U.S., especially since some do not even have the same types of copyright laws. (Busy Teacher, 2020). Additionally, there are some countries that view all knowledge as shared. Hence, they do not view plagiarism as stealing or copyright infringement in the way that American universities do. Students from those countries are likely to enter universities without any way of relating to the definition of plagiarism. (Busy Teacher, 2020; James et al., T.W., 2017).

Another important and valid point is that definitions and exhortations not to plagiarize appeal to student ethics but may only offer students’ limited insight into how to avoid acts of plagiarism in their classroom assignments (Gullifer & Tyson, 2017). Just because one can define plagiarism or has seen a few examples of it does not mean that he can use or modify source information correctly in context. Instructors may want to consider if they assign a lengthy, complex project, that they should include frequent check-ins with each student to see how they are progressing to offer an opportunity to correct students’ misconceptions about how to properly document sources.

Gullifer and Tyson pointed out that even some university staff and/or researchers have been accused of plagiarism. So, it is likely that even knowledgeable faculty may sometimes offer inconsistent responses to the way students’ attribute sources within their assignments. So, this underscores the complexity that exists when **anyone** is learning source documentation. I believe
it is the fact that it is not an exact science like mathematics or geography, one in which any errors are necessarily going to always be located and corrected by instructors, or even by software detection, that makes it so complex.

A crucial point is that even if a student does understand plagiarism it does not mean that the student understands the importance of using one’s own unique perspective (voice) within his/her academic writing. This is because academic papers are not meant to be simply a regurgitation of previous research. Ballentine & Larres (2012) stated that helping students develop a positive authorial identity is an important part of ameliorating inadvertent plagiarism.

Some students also may be subject to gray areas of appropriation of another’s original text that they do not understand. For example, Roberts (2008) mentioned a study that examined relationships between students’ confidence in academic writing ability and their ability to detect plagiarized writing. The study, however, concluded that even when students felt they had high understanding of the two, they often were not able to “put it into practice” (p. 18). So, clearly further training, explanation, and practice may be needed for students to fully understand these concepts, since they can sometimes become quite complex. This provides some evidence for the benefit of increasing students’ direct training in the gray areas of source attribution.

**Student Motives for Plagiarism**

Any discussion of plagiarism would be incomplete without information about students’ mindsets and motivations for plagiarism and any mediating factors. Some motivations for intentional plagiarism relate to time management, while others relate to grades, and other factors, but the most important thing is that when students choose to intentionally plagiarize, they have first measured the costs vs. the benefits of doing so.
Understanding Student Mindsets Contributing to Plagiarism

Some studies have examined student motives and attitudes regarding plagiarism (Cleary, 2017; Aasheim, et al, 2012). Cleary (2017) stated that students plagiarize because of laziness; panic; lack of confidence; misunderstandings, such as when some students believe scientific sources are much like dictionaries or encyclopedias, and that there is no need to cite their information, or misunderstandings about the purpose of research, such as in when students see it as a passive activity, not one that requires interpretation or reflection; difficulty weaving in quoted or summarized information with their own interpretations of the source material; relaxed attitudes about citation; sloppy notetaking; thinking that facts and percentages do not require citation; the continued learning process that correct source attribution requires causes them to do patchwriting instead of correct attribution; and the remix culture of today which encourages the use of derivative works as well as how students come from various cultural backgrounds. Cleary recommended strategies to combat each of these motives. Most strategies, however, included discussing the misunderstandings and clarifying them, as well as making plagiarism less reinforcing than writing assignments authentically. He stated this quite well when he suggested teachers, “Make it so hard to plagiarize that the student may as well do the assignment,” (para 4).

Ability to Purchase Papers Online

What is concerning to most universities is how in the past few decades, ready-made, “research-paper shops” online as well as the ease of finding information written by others in the field of inquiry make it easy for students to copy the words of another, which scholars like Gasparyan et al (2017) have pointed out, has resulted in a threat that could be detrimental to “scientific evidence accumulation.” For example, if actual researchers plagiarize, they take credit
for research of someone else, causing others to assume they are the originators of the original ideas or the study they are giving him/her credit for. When it is later found to find to not be that person’s ideas or research at all this calls scientific research and inquiry into question.

Gasparayan, et al went on to say that plagiarism can jeopardize credibility. In fact, Gasparyan et al believed this had the potential to unravel the very credibility of secondary research reporting standards (para 9). Gasparayan et al also pointed out that even in scientific journals the definition of plagiarism continues to be a problem which confuses journal editors, and that it is important to define research misconduct more clearly. Eliminating the occurrence of plagiarism and defining the acts that constitute it in university settings before students enter professional research contexts is crucial to future scholarship and pedagogy since some students eventually become scientists and/or researchers after they graduate.

Positive Ways to Deter Plagiarism

Some literature has focused on ways teachers can adjust the mindset of university and college students to support their thinking skills and level of perseverance, two things that could potentially safeguard them against unethical research and documentation behaviors in the long run. One is to teach positive habits of mind. Another is to increase the frequency of writing process accountability measures.

Habits of Mind Instruction

Habits of Mind research has provided information about the importance of student thought processes during learning activities. Costa and Kallick (2008) mentioned that intelligence is not static throughout the lifetime. They extended this premise by delving into the
ways that students think about learning experiences. What they learned is that thought habits do profoundly affect student’s learning.

As a result of their interest in this topic, Costa and Kallick came up with sixteen habits of mind to support student’s long-term learning ability. Furthermore, they described the following dimensions that the habits fall into, including value, inclination, sensitivity, capability, commitment, and policy (p. 17) Under teach of the dimensions are various traits: persisting, managing impulsivity, listening with understanding and empathy, thinking flexibly, metacognition, striving for accuracy, questioning and posing problems, applying past knowledge to new situations, thinking and communicating with clarity and precision, gathering data through all senses; creating, imagining, innovating; responding with wonderment and awe; taking responsible risks, finding humor, thinking interdependently, remaining open to continuous learning.

To support their theory about the importance of these habits, Costa and Kallick (n.d.) cited Resnick (1999), who noted in her research that individuals who can solve a problem under one condition may not necessarily be unable to solve a similar problem under different circumstances. Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick (2008) believed the habits would help this issue by opening students minds to across-the-board mental strategies that help anyone solve a myriad of problems, resulting in better transfer of learning. They also claimed that learning to use the habits can increase someone’s intelligence. At first, this belief was based on their observations of various programs in which students became more intelligent when the teachers treated them as if they had a high level of cognitive ability (Costa & Kallick, n.d.). However, the approach they developed focused on teaching students to use approaches to problems that, in turn, would make them easier to solve and deal with effectively. They found this approach to be quite successful
when they taught it to students because it goes past rote learning to teach students how to use critical thinking skills and apply them over the lifespan. (Costa & Kallick, 2008; TeachThought, 2019). They further suggested that schools use a holistic approach in which they (1) place posters and other visual reminders of the habits within buildings on campus as reminders, and (2) assign tasks to students which require that they look for evidence of someone using these positive mental habits in mass media productions (Costa & Kallick, n.d.).

Though this literature review does not provide enough space to go into each of the 16 habits, one example of a method of teaching the habit of *listening with empathy and understanding* is a method Costa & Kallick used which, upon reading about, seemed quite similar to that of active listening, which, according to Bodie, et al. (2015) was first described by Charles Rogers. However, Costa & Kallick strategically adapted it for the classroom.

First, they mentioned the importance of preparing students for questioning by the teacher stating that she is about to ask a question, which will be about the ongoing lesson. After giving student one a brief time of thinking before answering the first question, student one is given an opportunity to ask the same question of a second student in the classroom, who then offers his/her unique perspective. After this, the teacher calls on a third person, who summarizes the discussion of the previous participants, subsequently adding his/her own contributions to the conversation. Not only could this method positively affect any classroom culture, it could also keep students more actively engaged in the ongoing lesson, while also meeting the intended goals of helping students develop both empathy and good listening habits. This could also be applied to writing classrooms, resulting in more opportunity for engagement and learning about various topics in academic writing, including talking about the intricacies of correct documentation. This would offer students an opportunity to talk about what problems with
source documentation they are most concerned about solving, and to receive help from both the instructor and each other during class.

**Thought diversification**

Rana (2018) discussed how the habitual nature of thought processes can hinder someone from fully comprehending situations and responding to problems effectively. She recommended that individuals intentionally seek to create new thinking processes. Her viewpoint seems akin to that of Costa & Kallick above, who promoted habits of mind instruction. Rana was interested in encouraging individuals to learn diverse ways of thinking, to be prepared to deal with the real world more effectively and more creatively.

**Learning Journals**

Fostering a sense of value and pride in the work students are doing may be made easier by giving students a choice of topic when they do written assignments (Anderson, n.d.; Clayton, 2016; Dubec, 2018). Another way to accomplish this is through reflection activities, including, but not limited to learning journals. Anderson (2010), who dealt with students in British universities, stated that students may sometimes not be able to connect in a meaningful way with the knowledge they are dealing with (p. 206). For this reason, she supported the use of writing workbooks (learning journals) because they tend to stimulate students’ minds with ideas, and even though they require some time investment, in the end, she felt they were a worthwhile investment. Sloan (2020) listed seven types of learning journals that teachers can use to enhance student learning as well as other positive reflection activities.

**How the Habits Could Help Ameliorate Student Plagiarism**
It makes sense that since intentional student plagiarism is often a response to the difficulties encountered with writing and/or the academic genre of writing, or with time management, helping students develop the habits of mind mentioned above could be instrumental in reducing the motivation to plagiarize by providing them with the mental perseverance and focus to do authentic writing in the first place. Instructors ought to, therefore, consider using the habits as a means of providing mental and emotional support that students can use in developing and accomplishing authentic academic writing goals. Costa and Kallick (2009) referred to “habit clusters.” These are mental problem-solving strategies that can be combined to solve problems. It also makes sense that these clusters, if students master the use of them, could eventually derail the motivation to plagiarize, since the students would then have better cognitive tools to work with. Having the ability to succeed in solving academic problems could reduce or even eliminate the belief that they need to cheat on assignments. This could be particularly effective if the habits were combined, as Costa and Kallick suggested. For example, learning the persistence habit and combining it with the striving for accuracy habit could help students overcome the desire to take the easy way out by plagiarizing. This was corroborated in a study by Moss et al. (2017), who stated that students who plagiarize tend to be less persistent, impulsive, and lacking in confidence. A strategy mentioned by Costa and Kallick for teaching persistence is to teach students that there are always multiple ways to solve a problem and that one way is not the only way. By having an open discussion in class, the instructor can get the students to explore different ways to solve the same problem, giving the students a chance to learn to use various strategies rather than just limit themselves to one. They also suggested getting the students to create a “strategy box” to use in solving similar problems, encouraging long-term use of what they learned. Combining this habit with that of striving for accuracy
would promote conscientious citation practices. The combinations of habits and how this could help students improve their propensity for authentic, accurate citation and higher-quality academic writing seem numerous.

The way instructors could teach students habits of mind within universities is unlimited. However, a couple of ways the university could choose to organize this type of instruction would be as (1) part of a writing course, or (2) a separate course through the university. See appendix 1 for a sample lesson plan for introducing all the sixteen habits of mind to a class of students.

**Teacher Enthusiasm**

Another important factor that deserves attention when discussing how to improve students’ motivations and mental habits is that teachers can affect students’ attitudes about learning, and even directly foster student buy-in to academic writing if they are enthusiastic about the topics they are teaching (Oros et al., 2015). Teachers must find ways to encourage students and to keep them involved in class discussions and writing activities. Assignments should be as meaningful and personally beneficial to students as possible. This is because students need to feel good about their ability to write and about their purposes for writing (Literacy for Pleasure, n.d.). Some writing projects teachers normally assign may not feel relevant in the real world nor offer all students a sense of pride in their work.

**Student Accountability Measures**

Likely, the most effective way that instructors and university administrators can reduce plagiarism within the university setting is by increasing standards of student writing process accountability. The way to do this is by requiring various proofs of effort during the writing process, such as written brainstorming efforts, organizational documents for an upcoming project
(outlines, mind maps, synthesis matrices, and so forth). When students can simply turn in a large assignment without showing proofs of effort, it is easier for the students to plagiarize without fearing repercussions.

In conclusion, this literature review has revealed several strategies which could contribute greatly to improving students’ academic writing, source documentation, as well as their willingness to do authentic writing and avoid plagiarism. These have been strategically combined within the Handbook of Policy that follows, with the intention of promoting better outcomes in academic integrity and a reduction in university and college student plagiarism.
Chapter 3: The Handbook of Plagiarism-Proof Policy

Preface to the Handbook

As a former graduate writing tutor for Liberty Online Writing Center and a former writing consultant and embedded tutor at the University of Mississippi Tupelo Regional Campus, I coached a considerable number of students who wished to improve their academic writing skills. As a future instructor, I hope to draw upon these experiences, as well as my recent studies at Liberty University, to work effectively in the university setting. It is my hope that this project will contribute a broader lens for viewing plagiarism prevention as well as offer practical suggestions for teachers as they go about facilitating authentic student writing and correct source attribution.

Disclaimer

The purpose of this handbook is to help further the conversation about plagiarism prevention in the field of writing pedagogy. However, no claims or warranties are made by the publisher and the author of this work regarding the accuracy or completeness of the handbook. It also should be understood that readers of the handbook should use the benefit of their own expertise as well as pursue the study of past and continued research in this field, as the knowledge continues to advance day-by-day. Neither the publisher nor the author shall be responsible for any damages arising from reading of or use of the contents of the manual.

Introduction

One thing I have focused on in this thesis project is how the problem of plagiarism is somewhat systemic in nature. Thus, I have included some information concerning how students,
writing centers, and university writing departments can work together in solving the plagiarism problem. I am convinced that by using strategies that by clarifying student understanding of the academic genre of writing, as well as *making authentic work more rewarding than plagiarism*, universities can greatly reduce the frequency.

A great deal of responsibility, of course, will naturally be placed on the individual classroom instructor for developing this type of culture within the classroom and for holding students’ accountable for evidence of completed work, since much of the reality of what goes on in a particular course is up to the individual instructor. This title also clarifies the format of the approach, which will be a curriculum that addresses the problem in a multidimensional.

**Purposes and Intended Audience**

My objective for this project was to understand and explain the social system in which university student plagiarism operates, and to produce a practical policy guide high-level decision makers and other faculty can use in dealing with the problem. The handbook suggestions are based on a multidimensional systems-based approach. It relies heavily on writing pedagogy research and social work research, as well as intuitive principles to support the strategies within it. I have also based my approach on the information revealed during my own experiences in working with students directly as a university writing tutor at two different universities.

I also hope to apply some of this information about ways to positively position the environment within educational and/or work situations in my future occupation as a future high school teacher, community college or university instructor, or editor for a major company, I hope this handbook can serve to (a) offer some practical help to other instructors who are just entering the field of teaching and to college, and (c) encourage university writing departments
within the U.S. to reconsider the system that plagiarism operates within, and change the singular focus on ethics, policy, and punishment into a broader one that recognizes all of the factors that operate within the system of university plagiarism.

**The Knowledge Gap This Handbook fills**

There are high stakes involved in dealing with plagiarism, particularly for research but also for student scholarship. For that reason, there seems to be plenty of research on plagiarism, but what instructors need is a handbook that brings the major information and strategies for prevention of plagiarism together, something they can apply within the college classroom to minimize the numbers of cases of this behavior that they have to deal with. So much knowledge has been disseminated across so many journals and books that to sort this all out could become quite overwhelming for new instructors. This is the reason why having a handbook of strategies for all stakeholders in university plagiarism could be so helpful.

**The Components of the Problem Solution**

The handbook also takes account of the mindset needed for academic writing and the habits of mind students need to become effective, authentic academic writers as well as successful professionals in their career of choice. Some students are not mentally prepared for student writing, but habits of mind train students to do the kind of thinking that supports learning and it also includes metacognition activities such as reflective writing.

These habits of mind are based on the sixteen habits written about in Costa and Kallick, (2008). Not only do these foster student learning, but Costa and Kallick claimed that developing the habits help students develop character, pointing out that character is also steeped in thought processes just like learning. Dalal (2015) also indirectly supported this consideration in his
research concerning reflection tasks and responses to plagiarism, stating that universities should consider using reflection tasks to respond to academic integrity violations. As well, Cox (2014) supported self-reflection activities to connect with feelings and understand them better in addition to improving student learning.

The handbook also emphasizes the need for a special, instructor-facilitated guided writing practice space and time for students within the university environment, (writing labs), for which they will receive course credit. The problem solution also promotes a direct requirement for students to submit regular writing accountability artifacts (proofs of writing assignment engagement) for larger writing assignments (over five pages) rather than a simple rough draft and outline. This is because providing proofs on larger assignments will likely reduce student procrastination and help students keep up with of written projects. It also increases the effort required in the case of students who may try to intentionally plagiarize by purchasing a paper online. Though in some cases a student may be able to get by with this by obtaining proofs of the work done by the ghost writer, it would at least add an additional “inconvenience factor” to their situation, one that might serve to deter them from plagiarism in the future. If writing effort is built into a classroom routine, it makes sense that this would build the students’ momentum for getting through their writing projects, as opposed to working at home where there are frequent distractions such as cell phones, social media, and other interruptions; furthermore, if students do end up having to bring some of the work home, the momentum already built toward the project can help students in terms of motivation as well as reduce the load of after-class work. This will also be helpful to students who have multiple outside responsibilities and interests.

The Uncontrolled Writing Environment
Something else this problem solution takes account of is that most of the writing that university and college students do happens in a very uncontrolled environment, not one where this type of participatory environment can take place. (See Figure 4 below for an illustration of various student writing contexts). Instead, the handbook recommends creating writing labs students must attend for credit. This is because other writing environments are mostly outside of the university’s influence, and offer little-to-no support for student writers, for example, when students write include students’ homes, public libraries, or other places students decide to work on an upcoming assignment. Unfortunately, in these contexts, access to an instructor’s guidance is limited during some particularly essential parts of the academic writing process. This is also true even if students work on their written projects within campus writing centers, since peer-level help is sometimes all that is available. University faculty should not assume that tutors can perform the same function as instructors, though they do offer great support and are essential to university and college writing communities in that they offer students the coaching and the support of a more knowledgeable peer than themselves, plus offer worksheets and workshops that can be quite helpful to students who use the services.

Expert guidance is particularly important for lower-performing students during the drafting and source attribution stages, but also during information gathering. Though university writing centers and instructor office hours are meant to fill this gap, there are many students who, no doubt, truly need much more than the amount this provides. It is clear why this gap in writing instruction needs to be remedied. I believe that writing labs supervised by instructors could be instrumental in reducing the current plagiarism problem within post-secondary institutions.
Figure 5: Environments for Student Writing

Better Environmental Writing Contexts

There are two options for better-supported writing contexts that I wish to recommend in this handbook. Those are (1) instructor-led writing labs and (2) student writing groups with instructor-support at the beginning followed by a gradual release of responsibility to the students. The Instructor-led writing practice would be done within the context of a new writing lab requirement instituted by curriculum and policy makers. It would require 2 to 3 hours per week of in-class writing within the lab. The assignments would be completed in a setting where students can receive the guidance of a writing lab instructor, such as a designated classroom or one with computers in the event that some students do not have their own to use. This would allow students to receive more help with documentation than they currently get within a lecture-only class form, and they would also get the opportunity to receive direct feedback on their writing in class. There would be an emphasis on setting writing goals, which would be primarily
decided by the student but also collaborative, in that the instructor would provide guidance as the student selects from a list of appropriate writing goals. As well, there would be an emphasis on the use and development of students’ habits of mind as they write assignments.

A second option, and one that could be done within the same writing labs, is that of student writing groups, with the option of having one type for developmental writers who need support, another that focuses on critique for more experienced writers, and another group of extremely high-functioning writers who plan to eventually teach writing themselves, which could together become a plagiarism detection committee. Developing these types of committees would offer some unique learning experiences for these high-achieving students, provide some additional support to the instructor in identifying and ameliorating student plagiarism, and offer more than one chance for plagiarism to be caught before it gets out of hand.

A Birdseye View of the Project

On the next page is a basic diagram which shows a more complete vision of the environmental spheres of influence in which university plagiarism prevention measures should take place. Those include basic environmental categories such the classroom culture, university policies, cooperation with support personnel, curriculum expansions, and dedication to applying the ICAI approach to academic integrity and plagiarism assessment and prevention throughout campuses. Following the diagram are the methods I propose should be used to accomplish this in today’s universities, that is, in brick-n-mortar universities and community colleges and an application for online universities.
Topics Covered in the Handbook

A focus on empowering students to write authentically will set them up to be successful much more than focusing on identification and penalty measures for plagiarism alone. I believe this situation, among other things, should be transformed if educational institutions hope to prevent student plagiarism in the long run.

Some great ways to set up a better curriculum and culture for undergraduate students would be (1) information literacy training for undergraduate students (2) training in habits of mind, (3) accountability checkpoints within students’ writing projects, (4) smaller class sizes, (4) eliminating subjective grading, and (5) providing frequent, brief instructor conferences and
peer feedback. This is something I would love to see happen in the future, and it is part of what I suggest in the enclosed handbook.

In summary, I have recommended some changes I believe should be implemented in a multidimensional method to reduce plagiarism at most universities and colleges, including both research universities and community colleges. I am convinced that setting up an engaging classroom culture can help provide the motivation students need for academic writing success; prior, separate training in source attribution, a greater focus on accountability, and the use of micro-projects that culminate in one large project. Also, one of the most essential parts of this multidimensional approach is the use of the writing lab, since it will not only support accountability and provide a place for students to interact with instructors and peers, but also support the development of authorial identity as each student practices academic writing in a safe place where their learning needs are supported.

**Part II. New Plagiarism Prevention Policy Components**

Considering how students still seem to struggle to avoid plagiarism and to learn correct source attribution, universities need to offer more opportunities for practice and further instruction in proper documentation and in argumentation than what they currently are receiving. This might help student overcome problems with inadvertent plagiarism. The problem is that often the current amounts of student practice of source attribution are limited at best. Any relevant skill requires a significant amount of practice to master. Source attribution in student academic writing is no exception to this. This is something this handbook takes account of and which administrators need to provide for in the curriculum.
Program Components Diagram

Figure 8 below is a diagram of the program components recommended in the handbook. They include recommendations that university and college writing departments require student writing artifacts, use the ACAI guidelines, increase staff collaboration, use primarily low-stakes writing assignments, make habits of mind training and special “mini-classes” about documentation and the conventions of the academic writing genre part of the curriculum.

Figure 7: The Program Components

Accountability Recommendations (Combined Mega, Macro, Meso-Micro Solutions)

I have recommended that university administrators institute policies that require writing process artifacts be provided to instructors by all students. The details of how this will be
accomplished will be discussed within the handbook. By making it easier for a student to do authentic work than to plagiarize, intentional student plagiarism can become less prevalent in universities and colleges in the U.S.

**Ethical Approach Recommendation (Macro-solution)**

Plagiarism currently remains entrenched within a sort of ethical stigma that many universities and instructors view it. In some cases, there is a prevalence of what Vehvilainen et al (2018) called the *rule ethical approach*, in which rules and policies are applied without much consideration of the student or their intentions as well as the comprehension of plagiarism acts; however, it is my hope that my efforts here will also encourage the powers that be to view plagiarism as a systemic problem, one that can be successfully addressed by adapting the culture within which it operates. I believe that when the systems that feed plagiarism are fully understood by faculty and other university stakeholders, it supports a student-centered, *care ethical approach*, one which emphasizes “student intentions and understandings” while also embracing ethics, along with an acknowledgement that student writers are progressive learners (Vehvilainen, et al, 2018, p. 2). For this reason, the handbook will be understood to support the care ethics approach’s reasoning concerning plagiarism.

**Course Related-Policy Adjustments (Combined Mega-and Macro-solution)**

- **New requirement One**: All undergraduate degrees require completion of the following mini courses as prerequisites to higher level courses: (2 to 4 weeks) Student must take at least 3 of the following. It qualifies for 3 semester hours credit *Introduction to Information Literacy, Introduction to Source Attribution/Documentation* (choose APA, MLA, Chicago Style, or Turabian section based on student’s chosen field of study) *Intro*
to Academic Writing Genre Conventions, and Intro to Academic Rhetoric and Argumentation.

- **New requirement two:** Undergraduate degree completion should include, in addition to lecture courses, an added **writing lab course requirement** for each class that uses intensive writing within the course. Each lab counts as 3 **semester hours credit** in the student’s degree completion program. The minimum number of writing lab credits for graduation for a program will be stated in the university handbook and online within the degree completion program section for that program. Writing labs time lengths will be determined by policymakers but I recommend a minimum of one hour to one hour-and-a-half, twice weekly for courses that meet two times weekly, and one hour, three times weekly for courses that attend three times weekly. The setting will be decided by the instructor of the course, but they could be stationed within a classroom that has plenty of computers, the computer lab, or another location of the lecturer or university departments’ choice, if students are allowed to bring their laptops instead of using university computers.

- **Writing Labs** will always be proctored by faculty. One Instructor and if possible, at least one embedded writing center tutor or library staff member will be available for student questions or concerns during the entire period. Certain assignments of the instructor’s choice must be completed during lab time for the student to receive credit for the lab course. Ungraded assignments or other assignments of the instructor’s choice may be done outside of the lab on the students’ own time if lab time is not sufficient for those assignments.
• **New requirement three**: The 16 *Habits of Mind* will now be taught within the curriculum within the introduction to composition courses I and II.

**New Committee Program Suggestion (Meso and Macro-influence solution)**

Also included in my recommendations for preventing plagiarism on university campuses is the institution of something I have coined as *Undergraduate and Graduate Plagiarism Review Boards*. The committees would be composed of students who intend to become university or high school writing instructors upon graduation and/or students who work in the university or college writing center, since, at times, there may not be enough education majors who wish to participate in the program. Participation as a reviewer would reward the student with college credit that would later apply toward their student teaching requirements if are an education program student. The amount of credit for this would be determined by policies enacted by higher-level curriculum decision-makers.

The review board members would undertake a first-pass plagiarism detection effort on all graded writing assignments for undergraduate and graduate students, including not only the use of a software detection program like Turnitin, but also by looking at student sources and other writing artifacts they use in writing their papers. (If there are not enough review board members available, this could be limited to first-pass plagiarism detection efforts for first-year undergraduate papers.) The experience would be valuable for those participating as reviewers since they would gain experience in detecting and making decisions on the presence of plagiarism in undergraduate papers and assist instructors in identification proceedings. Reviewers would not be responsible for the final determination of plagiarism. Instead, this would be decided by the student’s instructor and/or the university academic integrity board.
All undergraduate and graduate students in writing-intensive courses would be required to submit any written assignments for a grade in two locations: one link that submits to the committee and another to the instructor. Once the appropriate Review Board has done the first-pass using either Turnitin, SafeAssign, or other detection software, the committee will send a short report form to the instructor, with an overall plagiarism score and check marks besides a list of the most likely areas or causes of plagiarism within the students’ work. The above detection software use is justifiable since it will assist the committee in narrowing down which student papers need a closer look, but the percentages will not be used as a sole determiner for plagiarism. Both the committee members and the students’ instructors will examine the submitted work in more detail and determine if plagiarism is likely, then decide which student papers should be sent to the Academic Integrity Board. Adding these committees to the university’s meso-culture sphere would increase the likelihood that students would be more motivated to write their papers instead of resorting to online paper mills or getting a personal acquaintance to do their writing assignment.

Use of ICAI (2020)’s 10 Approaches to Increasing Academic Integrity (Macro influence solution)

The International Center for Academic Integrity (2020) recommends ten basic approaches to increasing academic integrity on its online blog. Its statements also support the idea of having committees composed of students and faculty, which is very similar to the idea of the Graduate Plagiarism Review Board above; however, the Review Board would be focused more specifically on plagiarism and would be a practical type of application to ameliorate plagiarism more directly.
It is helpful, however, to consider all the ten recommendations of the International Center for Academic Integrity (2020), which include the following suggestions:

- Forming an academic integrity committee that includes students, faculty, and staff members.
- Using the McCabe/ICAI survey to determine changes in academic integrity on the university campus and comparisons to other educational institutions.
- Using the AIRS free tool to assess current strengths and weaknesses of the university in addressing academic integrity.
- Provide an academic integrity checklist for faculty or allow administrators to create their own checklist.
- Get students involved in helping or educating peers about academic integrity and/or reward them for participation in a committee or other involvement of this nature.
- Make sure honesty and integrity policies are student-centered, clear, developmental, fair, and enforceable.
- Encourage faculty to be consistent in reporting of academic integrity breaches and in educating students on the importance of academic honesty.
- Celebrate with an academic integrity day or week, integrity contests in which students write essays on their integrity, offering free refreshments and for students during exam week, and so forth.
- Use an interdisciplinary approach to academic integrity in which various organizations in the university are supporting honesty and integrity and making it a priority so that the university becomes a more united front.
• Use technology to encourage academic integrity such as social media posts and informative articles warning them about the risks of cheating and the benefits of honesty and integrity (adapted from para 1-6).

In summary, using these guidelines will offer post-secondary institutions a systematic approach that extends beyond plagiarism to all aspects of academic integrity. As well, it will provide a standard method for assessing university progress toward plagiarism prevention.

Social Media Academic Integrity Info/Blog (Mega-influence solution)

As stated previously in this thesis, students interact within other spheres of influence besides the university buildings, classroom lessons, and so forth. A crucial sphere of influence is social media. One way that universities could produce a greater impact on students’ beliefs is by making a connection with them at the places they are more often immersed in, such as social media, which is now a primary mega influence in modern society. This approach would connect with students online, a context where most are involved daily. To accomplish this, universities could use sites like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, among others, to post content relating to the values of honesty and service, which would not necessarily have to use the term plagiarism in order to achieve a positive effect (McDonald & Carroll, 2006)

IT Computer Use Policies (Macro solutions)

• The University IT department will require all students to sign in and sign out on the computer as well as on a physical logbook.
• Source documents for student papers will be registered with the system for comparison, based on search queries and the student listing the sources used in a separate file. The student can copy and paste the article information

Responses to Plagiarism by University Integrity, Exam, or Review Board (Macro solutions)

• Require instructors of students who have been determined to have plagiarized an assignment to schedule a consultation with the student about what happened and why, as well as how to correct the plagiarism in the work submitted, and what can be done to avoid it in future assignments.
• Suggest a reflective essay assignment that instructors can assign to students who have plagiarized. In this essay, the student must contemplate on and write about their experience/s that resulted in plagiarism, and what he/she has learned from it. This should be required before the student can be readmitted to class.

Suggestions to Librarians (Meso solutions)

• Offer workshops on information literacy (Lovelock, 2008)
• Offer information on citation formats when students request this (Lovelock, 2008)
• Train students in how to evaluate sources (Lovelock, 2008)
• Train students to use sources to support arguments (Lovelock, 2008).

Suggestions for University Writing Center (Meso solutions)

• Evidence students’ attendance of writing center appointments will be logged within the system for easy access. This data will be sent weekly to the Dean of Student Affairs and all other college administrators for easy access during plagiarism hearings.
• Writing center staff will also create and submit logs of student progress during tutoring appointments that will be kept on file within the writing center computer. This will not be forwarded to administrators unless a plagiarism hearing has been scheduled for the student. Students will sign a waiver of confidentiality if these records are needed for a plagiarism hearing. The student may also do so for his instructor if he/she requests documentation of additional efforts toward a writing project.

• Writing center staff must sign an agreement to report any student who asks a tutor to write or revise a paper for them, whether this was done during a session or outside of work time and regardless of the setting in which it occurred.

Suggestions for Instructors (Meso and Macro solutions)

• All instructors will include some habits of mind instruction within their subject’s curriculum. The sixteen habits of mind include: persisting, managing impulsivity, listening with understanding and empathy, thinking flexibly, metacognition, striving for accuracy, questioning and posing problems, applying past knowledge to new situations, thinking and communicating with clarity and precision, gathering data through all senses; creating, imagining, innovating; responding with wonderment and awe; taking responsible risks, finding humor, thinking interdependently, remaining open to continuous learning (Costa & Kallick, 2008). These should be integrated within the subject matter being taught, but students should learn directly about what each habit consists of so that they can consciously speak about and interact with the habits of mind ideas, rather than just experiencing “persistence, controlling impulsivity” and so forth without talking about the habits directly.
• **Assignment types should support process-oriented approach to writing as well as involve low-stakes writing assignments.** Instructors will break any larger writing assignment in parts. These will be micro-assignments with individual submission dates so that the various parts of the entire assignment contribute to the grade, rather than just having one high-stakes writing assignment that upon completion delivers a tremendous number of points.

• **Assignments that count for a large point value must be personalized in ways that make plagiarism more difficult.** For example, rather than a topic such as “Discuss the problem of racism,” an instructor could require a written assignment in which the student must answer, “Discuss how you first experienced racism, from either a victim or a witness standpoint, and how it has affected your perspective on cultural differences.”

• **All instructors MUST require artifacts from students to be turned in for any graded assignment** before the student can receive a grade for the assignment. Those can include but are not limited to brainstorming on notebook paper, mind maps, other graphical organizers, freewriting prior to the rough draft, handwritten or typed rough drafts, outlines, synthesis matrices, emails to the instructor, discussion notes from speaking with peers, family, or other friends about the project, personal reflections, and so forth. Notes cannot be worded exactly the same as the corresponding topic/s within the turned-in draft, and must be typed into a Wiki section in blackboard, so that this can be logged in terms of the time and ISP location where it was sent from. Copy and paste function will be disabled on the blackboard input area if possible.

• **Instructors are encouraged to ask students to provide writing center appointment discussions** to the instructor. Students or instructors can request a copy of the tutor’s in-
session or after-session notes, but the student must sign a confidentiality waiver on the writing center website or in person before the instructor can receive the notes.

- **Students receive course credit for use the university’s computers to do all original writing process artifacts for assignments if done during the writing lab class.** Making sure that early aspects of the writing process take place within the university environment will offer a supportive environment for the initial steps in developing a topic and in writing a first draft. Doing this within a required writing lab will also make it less cost-efficient for them to plagiarize. (In other words, since they already must spend time on writing, why not write authentically?) After the initial drafting stages of writing, the university can allow students use their own laptops or personal computers for revisions or for doing low-stakes writing assignments that are not subject to grading, but there will be reduced benefits to doing so. The details are explained in the following bullet point.

- **Instructors will offer grade incentives for certain types of writing work if it is done inside the writing lab.** Revisions can be done outside of the lab during the student’s own time if needed, as can written assignments that do not receive grades. However, doing the work during the lab on campus computers will offer extra point values that can only be made up for by doing an extra writing assignment from a list provided by the instructor. If they must do writing anyway when within the writing lab class, it precludes the benefit of getting someone else to write their paper. IT will remove access to sites that provide research papers or essays on demand, so this will make it easier on instructors who are supervising students.

- **Instructors must explain plagiarism and academic integrity within each class they teach, regardless of if it is a writing instruction class.** This means that all classes, even
those within other disciplines, must explain plagiarism, penalties, and the basics of
documentation for the discipline, (but not necessarily the specifics for various situations,
as this will be dealt with in the mini-courses on documentation) This also includes using
sample plagiarism vignettes such as the ones included in thesis which students will then
respond to in class so that they can reflect on the various types of plagiarism to better
understand it. Instructors must take at least one entire class session for this.

- **The university writing center, or equivalent, such as the university library, should**
  **offer training for faculty.** This training will further equip them to discuss this issue of
  plagiarism with their students This will also prevent the likelihood of different professors
giving conflicting definitions.

- **Instructors must require their students to participate in a group effort to practice**
  **after the above class session review, the use of the format** during one full class period.
  This can be done within the writing lab time if desired.

- **Instructors should set up student sharing and reflection groups within writing lab**
  **classes.** This should serve a motivational purpose as well as one of problem-solving
  among the group members. It should also serve as a ground-leveling activity for the
  student writers involved, by encouraging students to share their writing difficulties and
  receive suggestions from each other in how to solve them. These can be implemented in a
  similar way to the Agraphia groups in the book *How to Write a Lot* by Paul Silvia. Silvia
  (2007) explained this type of group as a “support group for people who want to write
  faster and better,” and to give them a “chance to talk about ongoing writing projects and
to get others’ ideas and insights about writing challenges, and to help each other set
reasonable goals” (p. 50). In some cases, groups can alternatively be used in a different
way, such as critique groups, in the event that students wish or need to develop their critiquing skills or require more direct peer review or critical thinking in a particular course. Preferably, students in the same group should have a heterogenous mass of different writing topics to prevent copying from one another.

- Before a plagiarism hearing is scheduled, instructors must provide artifacts from the student writing progress to give the exam board time to review them. If there is a reason the artifacts are not available prior to the scheduling of a hearing, this should be explained to the chairman through email or in a memorandum.

- Instructors will require a non-graded 300-or-more word reflection essay from each student on their understanding of source documentation, detailing their strengths, weaknesses. Followed by this, will be another required reflection of the same minimum length detailing how the student plans to go about improving on these weaknesses.

**Part 4: Collaboration Between Stakeholders (Macro, Meso, and Micro solutions)**

**Writing Centers**

- Writing centers must be under the obligation to provide any evidence they have of suspected student plagiarism if the university exam board, Graduate Plagiarism Review Board, or an instructor requests it.

- Writing centers must offer plagiarism workshops within their writing centers on a regular basis (at least 2 per term).

- Writing centers must keep accurate data on student visits to the writing center and have confidentiality waivers available for when students request their data sent to administrators, instructors, etc.
• Writing center staff should visit classrooms to hold brief workshops at any instructors’ request.

• Writing center staff are obligated to notify administration or an instructor about any student who asks them to write a paper or facilitate an act of plagiarism in any way.

• Writing centers should obtain clear information about all assignments from various instructors so that they will know precisely how to advise students regarding the requirements and expectations for various assignments.

Instructions

• Instructors must provide writing centers with clear information about all the assignments they require to assist tutors in how to properly advise students about each assignment, since often problems in understanding assignments is what brings students to the writing center.

• Instructors should inform students about the writing center resources at least twice per term. They should also offer some extra credit points for attending the appointments.

• Instructors should refer students to the writing center who are having trouble with academic writing and/or citation, but they should also ensure that this is done in an inclusive manner. One way to do this is to ask members of the class to discuss their difficulties with documentation within a writing lab group, help one another with their issues, then at the end of class, suggest that students who still have questions or concerns should go to the writing center and that it will be logged for extra points in the gradebook.

Students
• Students are obligated to report any student plagiarism that they know about or if someone asks them to write a paper for them.

• It is recommended that students participate in social media campaigns of the university to increase awareness of academic integrity

• Students should refer a friend to the writing center or the instructor for help if the friend expresses a need for help with writing assignments.

• When a student discovers a paper mill source online, he or she should alert the university about the site. This can be done anonymously if the student wishes.

**Online Applications of Problem Solution (Macro, Meso, and Micro solutions)**

• Online students must also submit the same types of written assignments to the Undergraduate or Graduate Plagiarism Detection Committees mentioned earlier prior to submitting the same types of written work to instructors.

• Online students can participate in Blackboard wikis and any other areas of blackboard that the instructor can use to allow for student brainstorming, notetaking, lists of sources, on projects which they can later access. Alternatively, they can email instructors their writing process artifacts throughout the course if these are not functioning or available.

• Writing labs online should be provided through satellite, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or other online meeting platform with a live instructor for consultation and direction so that students can receive instructor-guided writing practice. Credit will be provided for attendance for the same recommended amount of time per week. Asynchronous correspondence methods can be used for students who cannot attend live meetings due to their personal or work schedule.
Ending Comments

While instructors have the important role of helping students become engaged within a nurturing classroom culture and teaching students how to write effectively and with academic integrity, administrators, and other higher-education decision-makers determine curriculum and policy. The suggestions within this handbook are meant to offer a better preventative to plagiarism than simple software detection and punishment. It takes account of how the spheres of influence affect student’s motivation to write authentically or to try to “beat the system.” It also addresses the needs of those whose accidental plagiarism happen due to lack of knowledge and limited opportunity to receive instructor-led guided writing and documentation instruction.

Although some students may still plagiarize under the best of circumstances, the modifications suggested to the university culture can modify the natural conditions so that plagiarism provides less benefit to students than actual authentic work on written assignments. If this is implemented effectively, universities should begin to see positive change and significant reductions in plagiarism behavior, since plagiarism is often based on perceived ‘needs’ of students and the fact that student academic writing is a developmental process, not solely something based on their ethics or moral reasoning.
Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research

This thesis was meant to accomplish the following things: (1) characterize the true complexity of plagiarism for the academic community, (2) persuade higher-level university personnel that there may be a better alternative to relying on a simple “detection and penalty” approach to dealing with plagiarism, (3) offer a practical, multidimensional approach to plagiarism prevention that actually works in the university setting and (4) suggest research into a multidimensional-systems-based solution to the problem of plagiarism. Though convictions among faculty at individual universities will continue to affect how they address acts of plagiarism among students, this thesis project seeks to offer a multi-prong approach to reduce the prevalence of plagiarism by making some adjustments to the environment within which student writing takes place. It also offers suggestions about the roles individual stakeholders within the university can play in reducing student plagiarism behavior.

Academic dishonesty robs students of a solid education in the long run. Not only this, students pay a high price for their degrees over time, and they deserve the best education they can possibly receive.

The most important recommendations higher-education policymakers should consider implementing are the systems of accountability, writing labs in which students receive instructor-led guided writing practice, a requirement to use low-stakes assignments (instead of one lengthy assignment that counts for a large point value, out of balance with the work involved), and adding required mini-courses to help students better grasp the conventions of the academic writing genre. Additionally, faculty must always offer consistent, nurturing feedback and support to students, and ensure that the classroom environment is inclusive for all students, regardless of disabilities, economic advantage, and so forth.
Universities must also reconsider whether current penalties for plagiarism are both warranted and beneficial to the students they serve; thus, more longitudinal research should be undertaken into student outcomes for those who have experienced various types of university responses and penalties. As well, there should be a study of the use of the instructor-led writing labs I have suggested in this thesis to determine what types of outcomes would result and how those could be fine-tuned to students’ needs.

While we cannot presume to make all of students’ ethical decisions for them, we can provide them with the tools to do authentic work and develop practices that ensure their accountability. If we train students in correct approaches to source attribution, set up the correct learning environment, ensure student writing accountability, and offer opportunities and credit for writing practice, these things will go a long way toward helping students write effectively and avoid plagiarism.
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### Appendix 1: Sample Introduction to Habits of Mind Lesson Plan

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lesson Objectives</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Each student will describe aloud at least one mental experience from a past writing assignment with at least one proper label such as excitement, frustration, perseverance, impatience, and so forth. (Writing process steps should be related to some of these by the instructor)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The class will pair these experiences aloud with the appropriate habits of mind listed on the board with 90 percent accuracy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Each student will answer questions about two vignettes (stories about student experiences with academic writing) with 90 percent accuracy to demonstrate their understanding of how mindset habits affect written assignments.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
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<td>Hook-Lead-in</td>
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<td>• “Science has shown that feelings often affect how a person performs during an activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Who here has ever experienced that phenomenon where your feelings or thoughts seemed to anticipate how well you did on a task? What was that like? (allow some students to answer)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• “Today, we are going to talk about three things: (a) The positive habits of mind you can use during academic writing assignments. (b) how thoughts during the writing process can affect your writing performance, as well as our ability to learn new things, (c) how you can make your own thoughts work for you during a writing assignment instead of against you.”</td>
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|  |
| Pre-assess Student’s Current Knowledge of Academic Writing and Habits of Mind: |  |
| • “Let us talk about the common activities students have to do to write an academic paper.” (deciding on a topic, researching the topic, dealing with technology, writing an outline, freewriting, writing the first draft, revising, editing.) |  |
| • “What feelings do you think most students have during these activities within an academic writing project?” |  |
| • Ask students to give each of these experiences a descriptor name, such as frustration, excitement, and so forth). |  |
| • List the descriptor names on the dry erase board. |  |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lesson Procedures</th>
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<td>Activate Prior Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ask each class member to think about his/her own experiences during a past writing project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Get the students to share one or more of the words on the board that describe the experience/s they shared.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Place a tally for each experience named by students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Determine which experiences students encountered most often. The most common four will be the focus during the first two weeks of class.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Teach the Habits of Mind</th>
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<tr>
<td>• On the other side of the board, begin to write down the 16 habits of mind.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Briefly explain what each means.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Compare these to the negative (and positive also) experiences on the other side that students shared. Many will link together.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Explain that during the semester/term we will determine one or two habits of mind per week to focus on for the week. The instructor will talk about ways to use these habits each week. Then, each student will write a reflection paper of 100 or more words based on how they have used those habits of mind that week in working on an assignment during the writing lab hours.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
- Talk about what reflection is and how it improves learning.
- Talk about how writing is a skill that must be developed with practice.

**Materials**

**Materials Used Today**
- Dry erase board, eraser, and markers
- Student vignette worksheets

**Ungraded assignment homework**
- Ask students to think of how they could use one of the habits of mind to fix the negative situation they shared in class.
- Explain that they must bring the ungraded assignment next time for entrance into class.
- Assignment Details: Students will write a 100-word essay on how they will apply one of the habits of mind introduced today in class during a future writing project (ungraded assignment)

**Post-Assessment**
- Pass out two vignette worksheets of students. One shows student using habits of mind. The other shows the student not using them.
- Ask one student to read one vignette, then follow with class discussion of the names of the habits of mind the first student used.
- Ask another student to read the second vignette, followed by a class discussion of how the student could use habits of mind to deal with the situation and emotions involved.

**Key Academic Terms To Define**
- Habits of mind
- Writing process terms (prewriting, brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, etc.)
- Persistence
- Impulsivity
- Reflection
- Metacognition

**Personal Reflection Notes**

Source: Author