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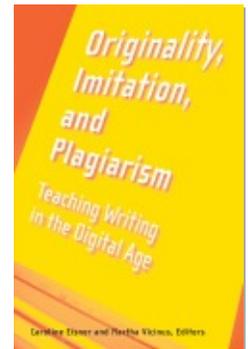
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Framing Plagiarism

Linda Adler-Kassner, Chris M. Anson,
and Rebecca Moore Howard

> *The analysis of common sense, as opposed to the exercise of it, must . . .*
> *begin by redrawing [the] erased distinction between the mere matter-of-fact*
> *apprehension of reality—or whatever it is you want to call what we appre-*
> *hend merely and matter-of-factly—and down-to-earth, colloquial wisdom,*
> *judgments or assessments of it.*
>
> —Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge*

On any given day, it's easy to find media coverage of plagiarism. A search in the Lexis-Nexis Academic database reveals hundreds of stories published in the last six months alone. A Google search with the words *plagiarism and college students*—which, admittedly, pulls up a range of items *about* college students and plagiarism, resources to address the issue of plagiarism, and other items related to the keywords—results in a staggering 1,690,000 hits. Plagiarism is *hot.* Nor is that heat limited to the popular media; colleges, faculty, and students are equally consumed by the notion that plagiarism is widespread and uncontrollable. Writing for the *New York Sun,* Lauren Mechling worries that originality itself is endangered by rampant plagiarism. And she quotes statistics offered by a university-sponsored consortium: "According to a recent article in *The New York Times,* Duke University's Center for Academic Integrity says 40% of college students admit to plagiarizing off the Internet, up from 10% in 1999." The *BBC News,* meanwhile, alludes to an "epidemic" of plagiarism, invoking the metaphor of disease—disease spreading uncontrollably—as a frame for understanding plagiarism. A volatile mix is brewing here: the fear that plagiarism is not only rising but attaining the status of a pandemic; that the core values of our society (such as its reverence for originality) are threatened by this virus; that students are duplicitous cheats or naive innocents; that tech-

nology functions as a medium for facilitating plagiarism; that technology can likewise be used to curb plagiarism; and that teachers' function is to thwart or catch plagiarists.

As faculty members in composition and rhetoric and as writing program administrators, we share in the concerns about plagiarism that are voiced by colleagues in our programs and institutions, by administrators, and by members of the public. Yet as scholars of student authorship, we have come to realize that this attention to plagiarism represents students and technology in ways that undermine not only good writing instruction, but the values of a liberal education.

News media reflect and perpetuate these problematic representations by describing student plagiarists as Web-savvy cheaters or as naive innocents.[1] This binary sensationalizes and simplifies the issue while "naturalizing" its own assumptions, impeding a critical understanding of intertextuality that can be applied in educational settings. Pedagogical possibilities are similarly constrained, deriving from a model of honorable or dishonorable, knowledgeable or ignorant students. As a counteractive, we advocate using the concept of "plagiarism" as a starting point for teaching students to recognize and adapt to the wide variations in the values informing the creation, use, and representation of text in the academy and the larger culture. This approach, we argue, is vital for students' development and for the educational enterprise itself. In 2003 all three of us contributed to a best-practices document about plagiarism that was commissioned and published by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA, "Defining"). That document promotes not only academic ideals of source citation but also academic ideals of writing instruction. Although teachers and administrators can and do draw on elements of that document, representations of plagiarism in news media (especially definitions of the problem and its one-step, technological solution in programs like Turnitin.com) demonstrate the power of the "plagiarism narrative" and the challenge of moving the conversation beyond a moral dualism, reductionism, and oversimplification.

Cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall explain the cultural process whereby definitions associated with "events" (such as plagiarism) are "constructed into a seamless narrative." Because they reflect and perpetuate the worldview of those participating in the narrative, these definitions become naturalized so that it is impossible to raise new questions or consider alternatives (Hall 4). This narrative is encompassed by what cognitive theorists, most notably George Lakoff, call "frames"—"unconscious cognitive mod-

els" that shape humans' understandings of the metaphors through which we construct our worlds (Lakoff, *Moral Politics* (1996) 159). Naturalized frames powerfully shape current understandings and future actions. The frames around "plagiarism" shape a narrative about how the roles of students, technologies, and writing instruction are dictated either by deceitful or ignorant students whose (intentional or unintentional) disregard for conventions of academic ownership are undermining the educational system. These actions that are taken (by educators and policymakers, especially) have significant consequences for students and for the broader culture that defines "education" (and particularly "college education") as a virtual requirement for participation in the nation's civic dialogue (e.g., Butler).

Naturalized Representations of Plagiarism

Representations of students, technology, and the purpose of writing instruction in the news stories analyzed here contribute to a conception of education that involves not teaching, but "catching" students. Students were described as duplicitous cheats in twelve of twenty-two (or about 54 percent) of the stories examined. Typical of this narrative is a statement by a philosophy professor from Eureka College: "When I was young, they were copying out of the encyclopedia. Now, they're copying stuff off the Internet" (Steinbacher). The representation of students as naive innocents who "don't necessarily know what plagiarism is" and "don't know that copying a few lines is plagiarism" appears in eight of twenty-two (or about 36 percent) of the stories in the sample (Diamond). Our sample was also dominated by two portrayals of technology. In fourteen stories (or 63 percent), technology was a medium facilitating plagiarism; this was coupled with the intimation that duplicitous students knew well how to use technology to their advantage and to undermine good teacherly intentions. Phil Anderson, director of the Honors System at Kansas State University, "credits" student ingenuity in a story from *Community College Week.* "The technology is certainly an enemy of academic integrity, and we have to figure out how to address those issues. The students are on the cutting edge" (Finkel).

The Internet is also portrayed as the weapon that can prevent this perceived abuse when it is used by qualified professionals. Of the fourteen stories in which technology was a medium facilitating plagiarism, ten stories also described technology—specifically, Turnitin.com—as a tool that could be turned against cheaters. A statement such as this could have come from any of these stories:

> The Internet constitutes a school. It is offering a course of direct and specific instruction to plagiarize. Students are learning lessons in cheating, but no one in a position of responsibility knows anything about them, because students are much tech-savvier than they are.

But it didn't. The "quotation" above actually comes from a 1910 article entitled "The Moving Picture: A Primary School for Criminals" and reads this way:

> These moving picture shows constitute a school. They are offering a course of specific and direct instruction. . . . The boys and girls of the land are learning . . . lessons in wrongdoing, but no one in a position of responsibility knows anything . . . about [them]. (McKeever 184)

Internet frames for discussing plagiarism reprise long-playing themes about the perils of technology, especially for children. Finding stories about the threat of one communication form or another to students or children in 2005, or 1954, or 1904 is an easy job (see, for example, McKeever's article, or Fredric Wertham's *The Seduction of the Innocent* for earlier examples; for scholarly analyses see Gilbert, May, or Douglas). It also doesn't take much digging to find discussions of the role of schooling in transmitting (or communicating, or teaching) "traditional American values," particularly the idea that a democratic society is perpetuated through the participation of virtuous citizens who understand the values of that democracy (see, for example, Dewey's *Democracy and Education,* or the language in the No Child Left Behind Act [United States Department of Education]).

But implied in the news stories about plagiarism is an additional complication: students are now using technology *in schools* to thwart the purpose *of* education. The level of threat is therefore more severe because one of the institutions charged with protecting "higher moral principles" and ensuring their perpetuation is being undermined by the very technologies that are doing the undermining outside of school. Thus, these news stories also fulfill a paradoxical role often played by mainstream media: stabilizing the threat posed by other media to those values. In this case, stabilization occurs in part through the framing of students and "antiplagiarism" technology discussed earlier, and in part through the framing of the teaching of writing. In the few stories here that mention writing instruction, the primary purpose of that instruction was not to foster good writing and good writers, but to prevent duplicitous students from cheating.

Certainly, good teaching prevents or at least deters plagiarism. Certainly, instructors in *all* fields should create original assignments, work with students on multiple drafts, and engage with students in the work of a classroom. But all too often stories frame this good work as important not because it helps to develop good writing or good writers, but because it *prevents* students from fulfilling the role of Web-savvy, duplicitous cheats. An interview with Greg Van Belle, a composition instructor at Edmonds Community College, illustrates how language that invokes best practices in writing instruction is framed by the idea that the purpose of good instruction is to stop bad students. "Detection services only inspire more ingenious cheaters," the story reports. "[Instructors] argue that carefully crafted assignments and more creative teaching is a *better* deterrent to plagiarism. . . . Van Belle said assigning an essay on the same topic year after year invites cheating. Better to vary assignments, link classic texts to current events, or ask students to write about how a work of literature relates to their lives, he said" (Thompson; emphasis added).

Van Belle's remarks capture an additional dilemma posed by the current frames surrounding writing instruction, technology, and writers: negating a frame—insisting, for example, that students are *not* looking to cheat—only serves to perpetuate the frame (Lakoff, *Elephant,* 3). The takeaway message from this story, for instance, is not that carefully crafted and more creative teaching will lead to good writers and good writing, but that such pedagogy will prevent students from cheating. Invoking "better ways to prevent plagiarism" serves only to strengthen the assumption that students are looking to plagiarize.

In the frame that dominates news media representation of plagiarism, students are undermining foundational principles of education associated with ownership and credibility; if they are smart, they are doing so intentionally, and if they are naive, they are doing it unintentionally. Teachers are either being duped or are playing catch-up to their more sophisticated students, often with the aid of ostensibly even more sophisticated technological aids.

Media representations create an objective for educators—the prevention of plagiarism and the detection and punishment of transgressors. This representation competes with and even detracts from the objectives that educators themselves hold—objectives such as helping students understand and participate in complex cycles of credit and credibility, write effectively, take responsibility for their writing, and participate in civic dialogue. Pursuing such objectives requires that we shift the use and meaning

of "plagiarism" and the representations of students, technology, and education that accompany it.

Reclaiming the Frame: Citation Practices

Reclaiming education entails teaching students to recognize and adapt to wide variations in the values that determine how a text is created, used, and represented in specific social, academic, and occupational contexts— values often connected to cycles of credit and credibility that obtain in the academy and the larger culture. Consider one such textual domain, broadly characterized by "public information" and increasingly accessed over the Internet. If you happen to be searching for information about safe food handling in your kitchen, you might stumble on a fact sheet at the USDA's substantial Food Safety and Inspection website. This fact sheet contains the following information about defrosting frozen foods:

> Never defrost foods in a garage, basement, car, dishwasher or plastic garbage bag; out on the kitchen counter, outdoors or on the porch. These methods can leave your foods unsafe to eat. (USDA)

Although much boilerplate fills the pages of the Web, this statement, with its odd use of a semicolon and its journalism-style omission of the comma before the last element in a series, can be considered a piece of "original" text. In fact, it is unusual enough to have prompted the following exchange between two members of the Internet forum Insanetrain.com:

> BANANA: I just read this on a food safety site. "Never defrost foods in a garage, basement, car, dishwasher or plastic garbage bag." Has anyone ever defrosted food in the frickin dishwasher?!?!?!
> DEVIOUS: Or in your car?

As original as the fact sheet excerpt is, we find it repeated verbatim—idiosyncrasies of content and punctuation preserved—at a site promoting the preparation and consumption of curries (CurryCooking.com). In the absence of any citation, visitors to this site must assume that the text was authored by someone at this organization, whose Web page includes the global statement, "Copyright © 2005 CurryCooking.com and its licensors. All rights reserved." The text is also replicated in an article, "Focus on Freezing Foods," at a site promoting Filipino recipes and cuisine (lutongba-

hay.com). Along with other unacknowledged information from the FDA source, the article is authored "by Lutongbahay" and later is said to be "brought to you," the consumer, by the site's sponsoring organization, with a 2001 copyright. A bit of searching yields many more cases in which material from the FDA document, including this excerpt, is provided verbatim and without attribution—at cooking and recipe sites, at state and municipal agencies, and at business sites selling food products.

Curiously, however, a slightly altered version of the excerpt appears at the website of the Johnson County, Kansas, Environmental Department, where the odd semicolon has disappeared, replaced by a period and followed by three newly inserted words before the original text is taken up again verbatim:

> Never defrost foods in a garage, basement, car, dishwasher or plastic garbage bag. Never defrost foods out on the kitchen counter, outdoors or on the porch. These methods can leave your foods unsafe to eat. (Johnson County Environmental Department)

The website does acknowledge a source (the Food Safety Inspection Service) and includes a page of disclaimers, among them that users of the site "are responsible for checking the accuracy, completeness, content, currency, suitability, and timeliness of all information." A search for this slightly altered version yields several other sites where it appears verbatim, with the longer string of locations and the absence of the odd semicolon, but again without attribution. At one site, Colorado State University's Cooperative Extension page, an article titled "Foods in the Freezer: Are They Safe?" authored by Margaret Miller, who works for the university, includes the altered line verbatim; the page itself looks like a conventional article, with a title in a larger font centered at the top, then Miller's name, then the text (Miller).

At this point, several interesting and puzzling phenomena concerning the food-handling text have emerged. The USDA site seems to be the "source" of the text, but it is impossible to know from the site where it came from and who wrote it (since many public-service government documents are not individually attributed). Other sites—CurryCooking.com, people at the University of Georgia and the University of Colorado, the Filipino cooking organization, and companies like Corex.com, a manufacturer of Italian pastas—also could be the likely authors of this text, but they variously claim or disclaim ownership, fiddle with the text or leave it as is,

and in all cases embed it within the rhetorical, informational, and pragmatic goals of their organization. Reflected in the many sites where one or another version of this excerpt appears is a kind of open-source attitude toward textuality, a free sharing of and even a willingness to slightly edit information with some trappings of ownership and intellectual property rights layered thinly over it all. The free-floating use of text repeats itself throughout the civic or public world. Explorations of other information domains—what do to when a tornado is approaching, the myths and facts of lightning, how to avoid being harmed in a flood or hurricane—yield hundreds of cases in which source text is replicated verbatim, cut and pasted without attribution, and in many cases so embedded in the organization's Web-presented material that it appears to have been created from scratch. Were these websites written by students and submitted in a college class, they would doubtless reinforce the argument advanced in the news stories analyzed above. Filtered through the dominant news media frame for representing plagiarism, these sites would most likely be called the work of plagiarists. Yet if we step outside the binary frames provided by the news media, we can apply alternative frames to interpret these issues of text ownership, and thereby situate our concerns and admonitions about plagiarism in the broader world of words and ideas.

One such frame comes from sociologists of knowledge Bruno Latour and Steven Woolgar, who have studied the ways in which science and scientists operate, and the values that drive their profession and give them individual and collective incentive. In their analysis, academics who want to rise in their professions become caught in a cycle of credit and credibility that is based in research and publication. As this credibility accrues, authorized by a complex system of professional checks and balances (for example, by reviewers who themselves have earned sufficient credibility to be appointed judges and evaluators), scientists earn credit—material rewards such as increased income and marketability, promotion and tenure, royalties, grants, assistants, equipment, and honorariums. Latour and Woolgar explain that this increased credit in turn produces additional credibility that enables further publication, public appearances, grants, prestige—and the cycle continues.

For many academics, the desire for credit and credibility provides a powerful motivation to research and write.[2] That desire is continually reified through the system of rewards and punishments practiced in academic institutions—a system that, in recent years, has found its way into educational institutions whose previous missions focused primarily on

teaching, such as two-year schools and smaller liberal arts colleges (the administrative motivation presumably being to advance credibility at an institutional level). As opportunities for publication have become increasingly constrained, the competition for credibility is only heightened, fortifying the ideology of "intellectual property." For academics, it is difficult to imagine doing research for an institution, writing it up, and not wanting to "own" it.

Seen through this frame, the rampant replication of documents written in public contexts for the public good, such as the information about safe food handling, may seem reprehensible, misguided, and unethical. Outside the academic frame, however, such practices look quite different. If credibility is not earned through the production of public documents, credit does not become a motivating force, and giving or getting credit for a text hardly matters. The goal of text produced in civic contexts is not to garner credit and credibility in the ways academics understand these concepts. Government offices even encourage the adoption and circulation of public texts. If anything, credit in public contexts comes from the appropriation and replication of important information; success in the production of a leaflet on AIDS awareness, for example, is measured not by the fact of its publication and its contribution to the author's curriculum vitae, but by the massive reproduction and circulation of its contents, with or without attribution.

In fact, academic institutions are themselves constituted of multiple activity systems and discursive communities and thus reflect varying ways to earn credit and credibility and various means by which certain outputs are or are not rewarded. Many cases of so-called plagiarism occur at the borders where one set of (typically academic) values and practices blurs into another (typically public) set of values and practices. For example, cases exist in which one university reproduces the plagiarism policy statement of another university without attribution, placing it on its website for public consumption (see Morgan and Reynolds). In such cases, a period of recantation, apology, and shame follows the discovery of the ironic borrowing, reflecting the conflict of two institutionally inscribed value systems (one that argues fiercely for intellectual property rights, and another that argues for the free use of existing documents when there is no sense in creating unnecessary labor). In other settings at these same institutions, faculty no doubt exchange and use syllabi, teaching strategies, outcomes statements, administrative procedures, and other texts without citing their original source. Because the value system does not reward the production of such texts—

despite the fact that they involve deep commitments of creativity, energy, and time to produce—their ownership and attribution are not important.

In spite of the nearly universal academic mantra for giving credit, few scholars and educators acknowledge the rhetorical and pragmatic forces that also work *against* attribution. For example, educational institutions do not want to create a public persona in which it appears that they are too lazy or unproductive to write their own plagiarism statements. Finding a perfectly acceptable plagiarism statement at another institution may be an attractive alternative to writing their own, but the desire to create a persona of industry and originality acts as a disincentive to crediting the other institution. Similarly, many business contexts operate with *selective* proprietary interests in their own texts. Internet travel brokers will replicate descriptions of resort properties verbatim from the resort's site, preferring to use the resort's descriptions instead of risking misrepresentation with their own; yet they rarely cite the resort itself as the source of the text. They want consumers to *believe* that they are representing the property themselves in order to create trust and gain their loyalty. The resort hardly cares whether the PR material it commissioned is being co-opted by the broker, as long as it helps to fill rooms. But if a competing resort were to use the same text without permission, litigation would certainly result. Here, the value system driving the selective application of copyright provisions is almost purely economic, the "credit" connected not to individual authorship but to corporate profit. In many cases, the text itself only partly reflects corporate identity and ownership since portions are often replicated from site to site, blurring the lines between intellectual property and boilerplate (e.g., "*Ideally situated close to shopping and major attractions,* the [El Corazon Resort and Spa features a series of Mexican-style villas, each appointed with] . . . "[El Corazon]).

Acknowledging the existence of different discursive communities with different practices and activities allows us to imagine that in no community is the textual value system unitary or stable (see Russell). With this more nuanced understanding of textuality, teachers can help novice writers to make ethically and rhetorically sound choices specific to the various textual situations in which they find themselves.

Aligning Representation with Practice

The divergences between frames surrounding representations of authorial practice and the realities of that practice constitute what linguist Michael

Agar has called a rich point, a moment when different interpretations of a metaphor, shaped by different frames, come into contact (and often clash) with one another. This rich point has fueled a sense of emergency that informs public and academic discourse on the topic of plagiarism. Alarmed by the latest technology that seems to threaten literacy and ethics, and working within frames that portray students as duplicitous cheats or naive innocents, educational efforts too often fail to recognize that the goal of writing instruction is to help develop good writers who, among other things, understand that textual practices (including those of source use and attribution) exist within rhetorical contexts and know how to analyze and meet the expectations in those contexts. Instead, these efforts strive to remediate individuals or systems in order to prevent students from fulfilling the role of duplicitous cheats.

The remediation of individuals occurs in institutional documents like the student handbook, which typically includes a definition of plagiarism, together with institutional regulations against the practice of plagiarism. Individuals are also remediated in writing from sources through classroom instruction that is focused on transmitting textual conventions (practices of quotation, citation, and documentation). Both of these efforts work within the frame of the student as naive innocent: If students are informed of the institution's policies and are taught the rules of citation, they will have the information needed for avoiding plagiarism. But behind them—in the judicial boards or deans' offices where plagiarism cases are sent—lies the frame of duplicitous cheats, as well.

These remediations work from what Paolo Freire has called a "banking" model of education (77), in which education consists of transmitting information. In this model, individuals are machines that act seamlessly as a result of being programmed with the necessary information. Failure to do so derives from a conscious choice to transgress; it constitutes an ethical lapse in the subject.

Not only individuals but also social systems are remediated within the frame of students as duplicitous cheats or naive innocents. Systemic remediations may take place in the classroom or the larger institution. Rewriting plagiarism policy, instituting an honor code, and redefining the term *plagiarism* are three types of systemic reform.

A fourth type of system reform—and one that dominates media coverage of plagiarism—is the use of automated plagiarism-checking programs, especially Turnitin.com. In this remediation, the purpose of systemic reform is not education but control—control of the duplicitous cheater.

This control can be instigated through dire warnings in institutional poli-
cies about the punishment for plagiarism, striking fear into the hearts of the
would-be plagiarists. It can then be enforced by compelling students to
"submit"—and here the dual meaning of that word is significant—to *submit*
their work to an online plagiarism-checking service. McGill University in
2003 went so far as to require that all students in all classes submit all their
papers to Turnitin.com before they would be graded. Writing in the journal
Computers and Composition, Bill Marsh describes some of the implications:

> [I]n remediating submitted papers, Turnitin.com introduces, as ethical
> technology, an ethical drug test to which all participants are subjected.
> Whether guilty or innocent under prevailing ethical codes and textual
> ownership laws, writers who undergo the test see their writing produced
> in particular ways by the Turnitin.com remediation machine. In sub-
> mitting their papers, writers submit to the color-coded reconstruction of
> their texts and, more profoundly, their identities as writers, insofar as
> the originality report frames every submission in terms of its program-
> driven assessment of similarity. (434)

The presence of Turnitin.com as the for-profit consequence of the "duplic-
itous cheat" frame is repeatedly reinforced in news stories, which directly
or indirectly refer to the product as a "cure" (and use its founder as a
source) for the problems caused by plagiarism; yet its prescription is to strip
from students not only their "identity," but also their agency as individual
authors, actually undermining the very education that those concerned
about plagiarism are trying to "protect."

We endorse the need for institutions to establish clear, fair policies on
plagiarism. However, we also understand that these policies must derive
from nuanced frames for understanding plagiarism, students, the purpose
of writing instruction, and education itself. As our analysis of the appropri-
ations from the USDA fact sheet illustrates, textual practices always exist
within specific contexts and reflect the values of those contexts. Textual
education needs to draw on the rhetorical savvy and analytic skills that our
students have developed from their interactions with a variety of on- and
offline genres and rhetorical communities. To be sure, these genres and
communities may diverge from the dominant academic model of textual
ownership and attribution; nevertheless, analyzing and appreciating their
textual conventions can contribute to a greater respect for and more suc-
cessful participation in the textual values that the academy valorizes.

These textual values inform "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism," the

2003 best-practices document to which we referred earlier (see CWPA, "Defining"). That statement says that one responsibility of administrators is "publicizing policies and expectations for conducting ethical research, as well as procedures for investigating possible cases of academic dishonesty and its penalties." The document also calls on instructors to teach "the conventions for citing documents and acknowledging sources in their field, and allowing students to practice these skills."

At the same time, the CWPA document urges caution in the adoption and use of automated plagiarism-checking programs: "Although such services may be tempting, they are not always reliable. Furthermore, their availability should never be used to justify the avoidance of responsible teaching methods such as those described in this document." The word *temptation* here is significant. The temptation of automated plagiarism-checking programs to teachers parallels the temptation of paper mills to students. Both are typically driven by panic. Students may resort to purchased term papers when they are confused or disengaged. Instructors may turn to Turnitin for similar reasons, when they have given a generic assignment or when they don't work with their students during the writing process. And just as students' use of term paper sites positions them to prevent the learning that the assignment was designed to foster, so the use of automated plagiarism-checking programs typically positions instructors to sidestep the instruction in writing that students need if they are to make nuanced, ethical decisions in the wide range of textual situations in which they will find themselves. The use of automated plagiarism-checking programs perpetuates a frame that reduces the objective of instruction to preventing, detecting, and punishing plagiarism instead of helping students analyze and participate in the practices of writing for the various contexts in which they write. The use of automated plagiarism-checking programs elides analysis of textual practices in specific contexts—the very study that should be at the core of instruction in written communication.

All writers are always in a developmental trajectory; writing is always intertextual; a variety of rhetorical and pragmatic forces work *against* attribution of sources; the use of texts is a complex act that is steeped in the conventions (disciplinary, behavioral, and otherwise) of academe; and the sanctioned academic expectations for attribution are often applied unevenly, even by experienced, ethical writers. Most urgently needed are educational efforts that give students experience in applying the skills and practices they need in order to do their own work in a wide range of situations.

The challenge, then, is to escape the limitations reflected and perpetu-

ated by the frames surrounding media representations of students, technology, and plagiarism, and reframe the ways that educators—and writing instructors specifically—talk about conventions of textual practice. We recommend the CWPA's "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism" document as a starting point for instructors and institutions. It describes educational practices within the frames of the developing student writer and the variability of writing situations and textual expectations.

Institutions that act upon this reframing would not just reform institutional policy but also pedagogical methods. This would involve faculty development workshops that are focused not on detecting or preventing plagiarism but on creating a classroom environment in which students feel able to and motivated to do the assigned work. It also could involve public events—public within the classroom, the writing program, the institution, or the community—that celebrate outstanding student writing.

Teaching citation conventions is a largely technical enterprise; one either has or has not correctly cited a source. Reforming institutional policy is largely procedural, regardless of how contested that procedure may be. But reframing the discussion of plagiarism to focus on pedagogy that engages students in a study of genres and texts in specific contexts is central to real change both in the frame around, and the incidence of, plagiarism in academic settings. To be sure, this is a messy, open-ended enterprise and as a result is often neglected as a response to concerns about plagiarism. Yet if educators can successfully teach critical reading and citation conventions, revise our institutional policies so that they don't include misuse of sources in the definition of *plagiarism,* and create pedagogies of mentored engagement in course materials, the need for control mechanisms such as Turnitin.com will shrink to insignificance.

Notes

1. Stories selected for this analysis were published between February and July 2005 and indexed in the Lexis-Nexis Academic database. Using the search terms *plagiarism and students,* we selected the first two screens' worth of stories excluding international and business-oriented publications.

2. Sociologists of knowledge such as David Hull go so far as to propose that this motivation is the primary engine of intellectual progress.

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