Academic Integrity: 
Perceptions and Practices in Secondary School Humanities Classes

By

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A research project submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Master of Teaching
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This research investigates to what extent, and with what results for classroom practices, Ontario secondary school teachers discuss and uphold academic integrity in humanities classes (English, History and/or Philosophy). It queries how dialogues about plagiarism, one of the most common types of academic dishonesty, are framed, and how assessment practices have been developed in response to this type of academic dishonesty. As supported by interviews carried out for this study, ethical conduct relating to academic work is approached differently across school boards and individual schools, but a common factor is the role professional judgment plays in evaluating violations on a case-by-case basis. Another consistency is the benefit of scaffolding to increase critical thinking and ownership of original work produced in class. In order to protect the integrity of the work submitted by others, the findings of this study reflect literature on this topic. They support the necessity for clearly outlined consequences that are followed through by teachers and administrators. This paper considers how an absence of standardized department responses to plagiarism, as well as academic culture of the school and background of its student population, impacts the tone and frequency of conversations about academic integrity. Attempting to gain insight into the intersection between technology and plagiarism, this study also explores the role of an Internet-based plagiarism prevention service in the broader discussion of morally respectful academic conduct. By reviewing current scholarship and integrating practices and perspectives from six secondary school teachers, this research project presents understandings of academic honesty, along with the challenges, successes and next steps for carrying on the discussion.

*Keywords*: academic integrity, assessment, plagiarism, professional judgment
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I believe that, if we are lucky, we meet people who are generous enough to share some of their time and knowledge, and help us become better people. I have had the good fortune to work with many individuals at the University of Toronto and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). They have provided generous support for my academic pursuits, and the time has come to publicly acknowledge their role in my personal growth and professional learning.

Thank you to my wonderfully encouraging research supervisor, Professor Elizabeth Campbell, whose guidance, humour and wisdom made the process infinitely more enjoyable. You taught me more than just how to write a research paper; you showed me that grace under pressure is always an asset. I also wish to recognize the Master of Teaching faculty and administrative staff who provided kind words and warm smiles over the past two years. You taught me that OISE can feel like a home away from home, and that its members can always count on an enthusiastic welcome.

Lastly, to the twenty Intermediate/Senior teacher candidates, thank you for being patient listeners and offering insightful feedback. Through our interactions, we have experienced different personalities and ways of thinking. Reflecting on the words of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, you all showed me that, like stained-glass windows, when we each shone our distinct colours, we created something beautiful.

To the six participants who contributed their energy, ideas and time to this research endeavour, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you. I am not sure that I can adequately express how much I appreciated your candour and positivity throughout this project, and your openness in sharing many personal experiences. You challenged me to think critically about this topic, and how I approach it as a teacher.
I would also like to thank Dr. Tyler Evans-Tokaryk for providing me with my first opportunity to engage in qualitative research while completing my undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto. Your dedication to the research process and engagement in the scholarly conversation continue to inspire me.

Finally, to my parents, whose infallible understanding, immeasurable support and unconditional love are the reason I do what I do. You taught me to always treat people with kindness, be comfortable with your authentic self, and trust that everything happens for a reason. No words can capture how much your sacrifices have meant to me throughout my education, and continue to mean as I embark on this new chapter of my life. I have been passionate for years about researching academic integrity, but you make me passionate about living every day of my life with personal integrity. Thank you.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

On January 11, 2013, an investigative article published in the *Toronto Star* exposed Chris Spence, then serving as Toronto District School Board’s Director of Education, for breaching public trust by plagiarizing several passages in an opinion article, as well as in online postings, blogs and speeches (Brown, 2013; Rushowy & Kane, 2013). The story was ‘above-the-fold’ headline news for days, and continued to be discussed weeks after he stepped down from his position. Spence’s story was one of many that prompted discussions of plagiarism and integrity: *Globe and Mail* columnist Margaret Wente, who apologized for “journalistic lapses” in a 2009 article in which portions were plagiarized (Wallace, 2012); author Jonah Lehrer, who fabricated Bob Dylan quotes in his book *Imagine* (Infantry, 2013); CNN host Fareed Zakaria, who was suspended after acknowledging that he copied part of an essay and claimed it as his own (Jonas, 2012); and German Education Minister Annette Schavan, who admitted to plagiarizing parts of her doctoral dissertation. They join a list of other high-profile professionals whose publications and works have since been cited as violations of academic integrity. The topic of academic dishonesty was even the premise of the recent Hollywood film, *The Words* (2012), starring Bradley Cooper, Olivia Wilde and Jeremy Irons. Advancing beyond classrooms and lecture halls, plagiarism, academic integrity and dishonesty have become “buzz-words” in the public discourse.

One day following the *Toronto Star* article on Chris Spence, the title on the front cover of the January 12, 2013 edition of *The Economist* teased its feature story: “The growing debate about dwindling innovation.” Although the article focuses on technological developments and breakthroughs, the crux of the argument relates to motivation and original thought. The article
connects to a discussion of academic integrity in three important ways. First, if we, as educators, assume students are incapable of producing original work, how does that shape our expectations? Second, how effective are we at motivating students to be academically honest? To what extent do we cultivate environments in which students feel empowered to take risks and express creativity, or do students feel it is safer to reword other scholars’ ideas and not think beyond pre-existing knowledge? Third, are students being implicitly or explicitly encouraged to become masters of ‘rewording and paraphrasing’ or independent, critical thinkers? If we are indeed reaching the point where we are simply building on the ideas of others as opposed to forwarding new ideas, then how does this alter our perception of what constitutes violations in academic institutions?

Bakhtin (1981) argued that ownership over words is ephemeral; that is, words do not belong to one individual. Scholarly literature, which is continuously enhancing past ideas, is essentially able to ‘borrow’ words from previous texts. Other schools of thought believe that creative thought and new ideas are only cultivated in atmospheres that promote sharing ideas, while also crediting other members of the academic community. If this is true, then one must ask how secondary school educators explain the importance of academic honour codes to students. Moreover, researchers must consider the classroom practices and assessment strategies teachers undertake to maintain the integrity of the space in which students develop their critical thinking and inquiry skills. The way academic integrity is discussed and upheld in humanities classes in urban public Ontario high schools is the topic on which this study is based.

**Purpose of the Study**

This Master of Teaching Research Project (MTRP) will explore the extent to which academic integrity is discussed and upheld in humanities classes in Ontario public secondary
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schools in urban neighbourhoods, and how the results of these actions impact classroom practice. The stakeholders directly benefitting from this study include students, teachers and administrators. My research also offers a qualitative description of how practising teachers regard plagiarism prevention tools. Plagiarism prevention services and plagiarism detection software (PDS) are integral parts of a discussion on academic integrity, especially given that plagiarism has become more prevalent an issue in the digital age. As a high school graduate in 2004, I knew students who commented on how “easy” it was to copy and paste blocks of text from Google into their essays, submit this work and “get away with it.” However, in classes where Turnitin.com, hereafter also referred to as Turnitin, was used, I casually observed a decrease in discussions about how many students attempted and got away with plagiarism. Students anecdotally remarked that they were not tempted to cheat as much because they could not ‘beat’ Turnitin. I used Turnitin as a student and later as an Education Assistant with a public school board. My observations as both a student and employee partially influenced my opinion of plagiarism prevention services and their role in academic integrity codes and policies within the courses.

Part of this research project examines if secondary school teachers consider it value-added pedagogical practice to use plagiarism detection software as an enforcer of an academic integrity policy in their classrooms. I query whether PDS programs, namely the international database and plagiarism prevention service Turnitin, are necessary to maintain the integrity of scholarly dialogue. It is intriguing that scholarship raises questions about the ethical procedure of reverse onus; that is, placing the burden on students to prove their innocence. Studies addressing the ethical use of Turnitin have been numerous (Carroll, 2009; Dames, 2008; Green, 2000; Vanacker, 2011). This detection software has also been a focus of articles and school-board assessment procedures given how the Internet has made the ‘cut-and-paste’ method of essay writing
convenient and tempting for students (Bretag & Mahmud, 2009; Howard, 2007; Wang, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary that my MTRP also inquires if teachers perceive PDS as a reasonable method for catching guilty students, or if services like Turnitin should serve as instructional tools to enforce the importance of demonstrating academic integrity. There are limited Ontario-based studies that inquire to what extent teachers engage in a discussion with their students about academic integrity, and if teachers perceive academic integrity as necessary for promoting a scholarly conversation within their classes. Much of the recent examination on the issue of ethics and cultures of honesty is conducted at the post-secondary level or professional school context, and is based in American or British studies (Baetz, Zivcakova, Wood, Nosko, De Pasquale & Archer, 2011; Boehm, Justice & Weeks, 2009; Costa, 2011; Hulsart & McCarthy, 2009; Walker & Townley, 2012). As other peer-reviewed research reports contend, if students are not deliberately plotting to plagiarize or cheat, why should institutions pay for PDS contracts?

Research Questions

The main research question focuses on academic integrity, with two related sub-questions that address particular information about teacher practice and personal views. In addition to inquiring about teachers’ understandings of academic integrity, sub-questions will investigate if teachers consider academic honesty an important part of the learning process. The central question is: **To what extent, and with what results for classroom practices, is academic integrity discussed and upheld by Ontario teachers in secondary school humanities courses?** The first and second sub-questions are: (a) To what extent does technology influence teacher-led discussions about academic integrity? (b) How do teachers perceive students’ understandings of academic integrity? For the purpose of this study, humanities courses include English, History and/or Philosophy.
Whether it is distributing a school-specific honour code or assessment guide, board mission statement, or having a dialogue about the importance of academic honesty, introducing the topic of academic integrity in courses provides teachers with the opportunity to set expectations for assessments, evaluations and ethical conduct. Although there are admittedly different types of actions that constitute violations of academic codes, this research focuses on plagiarism, which I define as the intentional or unintentional appropriation and representation of the ideas and work of another source without credit being given in the form of accurate citations and references.

Background of the Researcher

“Have you ever been caught?” is a question often asked of me when I explain my research interest. I acknowledge that one might wrongly assume I am atoning for some past indiscretion; however, I have never compromised my ethical standards of honesty and fairness by plagiarizing or cheating during my education. My interest in this topic began in the third year of my undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto Mississauga when I successfully applied for the position of Principal Investigator in a Research Opportunity Program (ROP) with Dr. Tyler Evans-Tokaryk entitled “Preventing Plagiarism and Promoting Academic Integrity: Strategies for Engaging Students in the Scholarly Conversation.” It was from this experience that my interest in both plagiarism and academic integrity, and the research process, was grounded. The research question was: How do high school students perceive and understand plagiarism and academic integrity? My ROP responsibilities included designing the research project, mediating four focus groups comprised of grades 11 and 12 humanities students from secondary schools in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), analyzing the data and producing a final report and presentation. The results of the study demonstrated that, although students understood that plagiarism was an academic
offence, there was a lack of understanding of why it was important to maintain academic integrity. As one student noted, “So what if I copy an essay off of Google? Nothing is going to happen to me, and it won’t affect my life” (personal communication, February 2008). Unless they were guaranteed to face serious consequences for plagiarizing or cheating, the focus group participants were not connecting how the act of cheating and being dishonest was something that could impact their lives both within and beyond their school years. Similarly, I found it particularly shocking how the qualitative evidence revealed that students would compromise their own integrity if it meant that they would gain something, either monetary or grade-related, from engaging in the act. The risk of getting caught did not dissuade the respondents from the potential reward. It was from this research opportunity that I wanted to further pursue the topic. This time however, I wanted to hear the ‘other side’ of the story – the teacher’s point of view.

The ROP focus groups were conducted with randomly selected senior (grades 11 and 12) high school students from social science and humanities courses. In the hour-long discussion during which I was moderator, many students referenced how their teachers did not address academic integrity and were reluctant to reprimand students whom they caught cheating or plagiarizing for reasons unknown to the students. The respondents did not blame their teachers for not enforcing consequences, but as Principal Investigator, I wondered how teachers would respond to questions about how academic integrity was or was not addressed in their classrooms, and how this impacted assessments and evaluations. I heard the student perspective, but as I entered the Master of Teaching (MT) program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto, I was curious to investigate the other side of the story. Therefore, MTRP provided me with the ideal opportunity to ask the questions that have been on my mind since my first exposure to the research in this field of study.
One of the purposes of the literature review is to address varying definitions of academic integrity. For this study, this key term is defined as an ethical principle governing the conduct of students and educators to ensure an environment of trust that promotes scholarly discussion and encourages innovation. An additional component to this definition is articulated in the preamble to the University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (1995):

The concern of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters is with the responsibilities of all parties to the integrity of the teaching and learning relationship [my emphasis]. Honesty and fairness must inform this relationship, whose basis remains one of mutual respect for the aims of education and for those ethical principles which must characterize the pursuit and transmission of knowledge in the University.

I believe a discussion about academic integrity should include how both teachers and students play roles in maintaining an open and honest dialogue in an academic community. I have come to appreciate that, by educating others, we learn more about ourselves and how we view and frame educational goals. In the classroom environment, teaching is not a one-way street. To be a teacher is to have the dual role of being an instructor as well as an active learner. In facilitating bi-directional communication between teachers and students, teaching can be regarded as a joint effort; a journey upon which all parties can reflect on how much they have achieved as partners in learning.

Teachers and students can learn from and teach one another, but for this sharing to occur, a culture of honesty, respect and accountability must not only be understood and agreed to, but enforced should any party in the relationship violate that tacit agreement. For instance, ignorance cannot be used as a reasonable claim, and according to the ROP results, 13.15% of participants
believed lack of subject-specific content knowledge was a factor in what causes students to plagiarize (Yoannou, 2011). Furthermore, only 0.07% indicated that it was possible for students to unintentionally plagiarize (Yoannou, 2011). It became evident that students knew what they were doing when cheating, but that they attempted to justify or downplay its significance because the penalties associated with it were not worth taking seriously. While conducting previous research, I heard stories about teachers who did not follow through on enforcing penalties for students who were caught cheating, plagiarizing or violating academic integrity in other ways. I do not believe in immediate expulsion for academic violations, but nor do I endorse a second and third chance rule that makes students not take the initial act seriously. If teachers or school administration have explicitly discussed academic integrity and the importance of upholding this honesty in and outside the classroom, consequences like failing a student on an assignment or not passing a course are justifiable, and should be carried out to hold the guilty parties accountable for their actions and to protect the honest contributions of other students.
Overview

Chapter 1 introduced the topic of academic integrity and provided relevant and timely examples of how plagiarism is one example of an academic violation with which the public is becoming increasingly familiar. This chapter also identified how the research gathered from this study addresses a gap in literature about the ways Ontario humanities teachers in urban secondary schools integrate discussions about academic integrity policies in their respective classrooms. Chapter 2 offers further elaboration, in addition to a literature review that positions the research question in the broader field of academic integrity and cultures of honesty in secondary schools, and how professionals in education have been, and continue to respond to, cheating and plagiarizing. Chapter 3 describes the qualitative methodology and procedure used to carry out the study, in addition to details regarding the recruitment of the respondent pool and data collection instruments utilized in the semi-structured individual interviews. This chapter also acknowledges the limitations of this study. Chapter 4 presents information gathered from the interviews. Finally, Chapter 5 draws conclusions based on the interview data, expands on the implications of this study in the field of education research, and explores how the results can influence policy development and school initiatives regarding academic integrity. A complete reference list and appendices are provided at the end of this report.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Current literature on the topic of academic integrity focuses on documenting and accounting for the increase in cheating, plagiarism and violations of academic codes of conduct. It is also shifting toward discussions on how professional and academic communities can respond. Ranging from research that attempts to define what would constitute a violation of academic integrity, to proactive measures educators can take in the classroom, the number of contributions to this field is expanding. In Canada however, peer-reviewed research that focuses on teacher responses to academic integrity and how it is introduced and cultivated in the classroom remains minimal. Studies from the United States (U.S.) and United Kingdom (UK) are extensive, and many of the strategies reported in qualitative studies are applicable in discussions about the issue of academic dishonesty in a Canadian context. This MTRP study will fill a gap in the literature by interviewing Ontario secondary school teachers to gain their perspectives on how academic integrity is discussed and upheld in the classroom, and the extent to which having discussions results in affecting classroom practice. It is necessary first to expand on the existing scholarship. This review will address three themes that emerge from the research: changing definitions of academic integrity; classroom procedures to detect and deal with academic integrity; and the role of technology as a tool to deter violations of academic integrity.

After a decade of research on the application of honour codes and policies in American academic institutions, McCabe, Treviño and Butterfield (2001) articulated a conclusion that one might consider obvious: university students’ understanding of plagiarism had dramatically changed since Bowers’ (1964) study of plagiarism (p. 220). The convenience and temptation offered by technology and the Internet significantly impacted the study of plagiarism and cheating more broadly. As the body of literature in this field grew, it became apparent that data collected
from high school and post-secondary students, who were coming of age in a world of technological devices and the Internet, would be of interest to researchers (Guiliano, 2000; Murray, 2002; Sisti, 2007). However, focus has often not often been directed on the beliefs and understandings of the practitioners: What do secondary school teachers think about academic integrity and its impact in their classrooms? Given the attention academic integrity has garnered in the media due to the disgraced falls of professionals and media personnel, the topic is one that should be investigated in order to examine to what extent the subject is discussed between teachers and students at the secondary level, and what the consequences are for committing violations.

**Defining Academic Integrity**

As articulated by Hudd, Apgar, Bronson and Lee (2009), conversations about academic integrity between faculty and students in their study were potentially “hampered by the fact that faculty and students tend to define cheating in unique ways” (p. 146). This discord is reflected in other academic studies that similarly concluded how definitions of academic dishonesty, and what constitutes cheating, do not necessarily have clear-cut descriptions (Kidwell, Wozniak & Laurel, 2003; Nuss, 1984; Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003). As Hulstart and McCarthy (2009) state, “when questioned, students and faculty provide varying definitions of cheating, but the most important definition of cheating is the one that students themselves hold” (p. 50). The challenge of determining an all-encompassing definition of academic integrity that can be applied in classrooms across a school board remains a topic of discussion, but more relevant to this MTRP study is how academic integrity will be defined for the purposes of analysis. This section of the literature review will provide some definitions, and conclude by elaborating on the rationale
behind choosing the definition purported by one set of researchers for the purpose of framing this study.

Instead of defining academic integrity, many scholars discuss academic dishonesty. Thus, some definitions are examples of academic violations, and it is from articulating common forms of academic dishonesty that a definition is inferred. For instance, academic integrity can be defined in terms of its violations: cheating on exams, falsifying bibliographies, and taking credit for the work of another individual or institution and plagiarizing. Lack of scholarly integrity is implied in the actions and misconducts outlined in the various meanings. By way of example, Gehring and Pavela (1994) propose the following definition of academic dishonesty:

An intentional act of fraud, in which a student seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization, or uses unauthorized materials or fabricated information in any academic exercise. We also consider academic dishonesty to include forgery of academic documents, intentionally impeding or damaging the academic work of others, or assisting other students in acts of dishonesty. (p. 5)

In a more recent publication, Hard, Conway and Moran (2006) suggest a definition of academic dishonesty as:

Providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for academic evaluation including papers, projects and examinations (cheating); and presenting, as one’s own, the ideas of words of another person or persons for academic evaluation without proper acknowledgement. (p. 1059)
All of the definitions provided above can apply to a high school setting, and are not limited to the context of the college, university or graduate-level many of the authors investigated. However, an exploration of definitions of academic integrity should be discussed given that hitherto the literature has provided explanations of what academic integrity is not, as opposed to what it is.

A definition of academic integrity is offered by the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI). It begins with defining integrity as an “adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty” (ICAI), before situating the importance of integrity in an academic setting. On their website, the ICAI mission statement purports that:

The core principles of integrity create a foundation for success in all of life's endeavours. Integrity in academic settings is a fundamental component of success and growth in the classroom. It prepares students for personal and professional challenges as well as providing a blueprint for future fulfillment and success. The International Center for Academic Integrity is committed to fostering an environment of integrity in educational institutions. Its programs seek to maintain academic integrity as the core element of education.

In reviewing literature on the topic, there are surprisingly few definitions of academic integrity forwarded. Rather, the focus is on academic dishonesty. For this MTRP, a proposed definition of academic integrity is based on meanings provided by two academic institutions. First, according to the University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (1995), Section B: Offence, Article I, defines academic integrity as knowingly committing any of the following offences:
(a) to forge or in any other way alter or falsify any document or evidence required by the University, or to utter, circulate or make use of any such forged, altered or falsified document, whether the record be in print or electronic form;

(b) to use or possess an unauthorized aid or aids or obtain unauthorized assistance in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work;

(c) to personate another person, or to have another person personate, at any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work;

(d) to represent as one’s own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work, i.e. to commit plagiarism;

(e) to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere;

(f) to submit any academic work containing a purported statement of fact or reference to a source which has been concocted.

This definition is comprehensive, however an alternative and concise definition of academic integrity is outlined by the University Library at the University of Illinois (2012):

Academic integrity means honesty and responsibility in scholarship. Students and faculty alike must obey rules of honest scholarship, which means that all academic work should result from an individual’s own efforts. Intellectual
contributions from others must be consistently and responsibly acknowledged.

Academic work completed in any other way is fraudulent.

Both of these explanations will serve as the base definition for the purpose of this MTRP study. It is beyond the scope of this MTRP to provide an overview of all academic dishonesty offences that can be committed at educational institutions. A definition, however, is necessary to frame this discussion. The definition of academic integrity in this research recognizes practitioners as vitally important figures in both the development and maintenance of respectful scholarly conversation within classrooms. As stated in the earlier section addressing my research question, I acknowledge the various acts that constitute academic dishonesty, but this study focuses only on plagiarism as the predominant type of violation. Plagiarism is an example of a type of academic dishonesty and, as supported in literature, one that is increasingly prevalent at the high school level. While the interview questions probe respondents’ personal definitions of academic integrity, I do not query their perception of plagiarism. For the purpose of this research, I instead define plagiarism as the intentional or unintentional appropriation and representation of the ideas and work of another source without credit being given in the form of accurate citations and references.

**Classroom Procedures: Teachers’ Responses and Strategies**

The groundbreaking UK study by Williams (2001) was one of the first to address the viewpoints of teachers and their concerns about academic dishonesty in the classroom. As stated in the published report, “The view of teachers…their confidence in their own strategies have not previously been researched and it is in this area that this article hopes to make a contribution” (Williams, 2001, p. 229). After conducting 120 semi-structured 30-minute interviews with teachers from 15 different high schools, the results were categorized into four groupings: teachers
who developed and enforced their ‘Own Procedures’ for dealing with academic dishonesty; teachers who had ‘Given Up’; teachers who were ‘In Retreat’; and teachers who ‘Need Guidance’. For those who used their own procedures, there were four mechanisms identified: a culture of honesty; continuous observation of student work; review of intermediate drafts; and ongoing discussions with students, which were thereafter referred to as CORD (Williams, 2001, p. 230). For many instructors, time and experience were factors that made a difference in their degree of confidence in detecting and acting upon suspicions:

It’s quite clear when a student’s work is not their own. You know your students. You’ve taught them for a year already, seen their work. (Williams, 2001, p. 235)

It’s quite easy to tell that it’s their own work. Just my own judgment, looking at it. (Williams, 2001, p. 235)

This intuitive knowing and experience is not present for all teachers, but as some teachers explained, they personally have a comfort level when approaching students whom they suspected of submitting work that was not their own, and subsequently following through with consequences if students commit academic offences. As one teacher explained, “You spot these things and you don’t let them through” (Williams, 2001, p. 230). However, for the teachers who were in the ‘In Retreat’ or ‘Given Up’ categories, the strategies avoided confrontation and, instead, relied on one or both strategies: rely on minimal coursework completed outside class; or do not require word-processed work. Many instructors who endorsed the latter claimed that “It’s very difficult. With word-processed work, I don’t see how you can tell…. It is much easier to cheat with a computer than it is by hand. Often you let it go” (Williams, 2001, p. 231).
Technology can be a double-edged sword when it comes to the role it plays in the classroom, but its use – or the lack of it – in the classroom is a strategy that teachers in other studies also endorse.

It is unclear in Williams’ (2001) study whether the teachers, who self-identified as having confidence in detecting and fittingly punishing pupils who plagiarized or cheated, had verification mechanisms in place to provide proof of the suspected violation. Those teachers, who expressed interest in having guidance on academic integrity authentication tools, were willing to learn more about Internet research and wanted students to learn how to use the resources available online with proper citations. As one History teacher stated: “We want them to extract information and also to analyze the websites in terms of content and attitudes….but I am concerned about authenticity” (Williams, 2001, p. 232). The ‘CORD teachers’, who created cultures of honesty within their classrooms, used what Williams referred to as a “two-pronged approach”: emphasize taking pride in one’s work and following through on the negative consequences or “public shame to which students would be exposed” if they were caught taking credit for work of another scholar (p. 234). Although this study does not outline how teachers put this approach into action, one of the main conclusions of the research was that “illegitimate borrowing” and legitimate participation in the scholarly conversation is something that students need to be made aware of by teachers in order for a culture of honesty to exist (Williams, 2001, p. 237). One of the queries raised by Williams is how to standardize the instruction of honesty codes in order to ensure that violations are being detected and consequences are being uniformly administered. In my research, inquires are made into whether standard protocols for plagiarism and academic integrity violations are agreed upon at a department, school or board level. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the consensus is that teachers are expected to exercise professional judgment as opposed to
operating from non-negotiable protocol. The standardization that Williams and other educators discuss does not necessarily occur in practice.

As concluded in other studies, students who perceive their peers as “getting away with” cheating and not facing penalties are more likely to cheat on papers and tests (Bowers, 1964; McCabe & Treviño, 1993, 1997). Teachers, who are role models in the classroom, can influence the seriousness with which students take the issue of academic integrity. This approach is supported by Bartlett and Smallwood (2004), who reported how faculty promote honest conduct is an issue that influences the students under the educator’s care and, as Reina and Reina (2008) determined in their study on faculty integrity modeling and behaviour, positions of trust. In connection with S. Williams’ (2001) study, practitioners have a responsibility to take the lead in creating what Hulsart and McCarthy (2009) describe as “an ethical climate in the classroom” (p. 54).

The results from Williams’ (2001) research are supported in a more recent study by Levy and Rakovski (2006), who were interested in faculty response to academic integrity, and the construction of academic honesty policies and communication with students at colleges and universities in the U.S. Like the majority of studies published in this field, the focus is on higher-educational institutions. However, the findings are applicable to my MTRP and shed light on different strategies instructors can use. For instance, dedicating part of a course outline or syllabus to academic integrity and making the instructor’s expectations clear from the beginning of the course were referenced as some of the most common strategies. However, as Gomez (2001) reported, 35% of high school and middle school students agreed with the statement: “I would be willing to cheat on a test if it would help me get into college” (p. 16). If students were willing to cheat to get into college, would including an academic integrity policy on a course code be an
effective deterrent or educational tool? In a survey by the Josephson Institute of Ethics, 74% of the 12,000 high school students polled reported that they cheated on a test at least once within the past academic year (Levy & Rakovski, 2006, p.736). However, in the Josephson Institute’s 2012 online report and press release, “The Ethics of American Youth”, of the 23,000 high school students surveyed, only 32% admitted to copying an Internet document and submitting it for a classroom assignment, which is a 2% decrease from the same survey in 2010. Even statistics about lying decreased: “Students who said they lied to a teacher in the past year about something significant dropped from 61 percent in 2010 to 55 percent in 2012” (Josephson Institute, 2012).

According to Michael Josephson, Founder and President of the Josephson Institute of Ethics, statistics like these are “a small ray of sunshine shining through lots of dark clouds [because] changes in children’s behavior of this magnitude suggest a major shift in parenting and school involvement in issues of honesty and character” (Josephson Institute, 2012). Equally promising are the self-reflective questions in the 2012 survey that inquired how students view their own integrity and codes of ethical conduct. When provided with the statement “it is important for me to be a person with good character”, 99% of students agreed. Similarly, 93% claimed that they were satisfied with their ethics and moral character. How can these statistics be reconciled with the reports of plagiarism and breaches of academic integrity in today’s student and young professional populations? Could it be that the increased focus on honour codes in schools and businesses has had an impact on the value students place on being ethical?

The educator’s role in promoting academic integrity was extensively researched and reported by Hulsart and McCarthy (2009) from Austin Peay State University. Restating the four questions posed by Kouzes and Posner (1993), they reinforced the need for faculty to reflect on their own practice in relation to how to develop courses and an ethical classroom climate: Is my
behaviour predictable? Do I communicate clearly or carelessly? Do I treat promises seriously or lightly? Am I forthright or dishonest? (p. 54). Like much of the research within the last two decades, Hulsart and McCarthy (2009) shift the discussion toward investigating academic integrity policies and student behaviour as moral and ethical issues. Furthermore, their study picks up where Williams (2001) and other studies leave off regarding how teachers can create these cultures of honesty. Williams (2001) reports that teachers require students to submit drafts of work at intermediary stages in the writing process, but Hulsart and McCarthy (2009) and Gomez (2001) go further by suggesting that varying the type and number of assessments can decrease the temptation for students to cheat. Balancing research essays with multiple choice quizzes or exams is one suggestion that is supported by scholars in the field of education pedagogy. This literature review will not debate the effectiveness of teaching methods, but will recognize that collaborative work or draft submissions are not necessarily solutions to academic violations, but they can be measures taken to reduce the number of offences teachers encounter.

In studies by both McCabe (2005b) and Schneider (1999), their research found that faculty at universities and colleges felt that discussing integrity standards was not their responsibility. As McCabe (2005b) explained, the result was that students believed these “weak institutional policies and unobservant or unconcerned faculty were ‘allowing’ others to cheat” (p. 26). Building upon this research, Hudd, Apgar, Bronson and Lee (2009) discussed the impact of time on full and part-time faculty at US colleges and their willingness to engage in a discussion of academic integrity with students. Their findings suggest that part-time faculty members are less likely to educate students about integrity in scholarship, which is consistent with the findings by Hard, Conway and Moran (2006). Their research concluded those part-time faculty members are less likely to challenge and follow through on student violations of academic dishonesty. Hudd, Apgar,
Bronson and Lee (2009) offered one of many possible explanations: “Time constraints may pose the greatest barrier to engaging part-time faculty more fully in the campus dialogue on integrity” (p. 165). This study raises an interesting question that is relevant to this MTRP: Do teachers at semestered schools feel too rushed to deal with issues of academic dishonesty? If instructors perceive the term to go by quickly, would they be more likely to dismiss potential violations? Gomez (2001) recognized that a strategy used in high schools is to use conferencing and ask students to explain their answers orally, while appreciating that time is required for this method (p. 20).

Exploring cultures of honesty and the trust relationship between teacher and student to establish a safe learning environment is relevant given the increased attention to plagiarism in academia (Kitahara, Westfall & Mankelowicz, 2011; Papp & Wertz, 2009). Before these studies, in the December/January 2007 issue of the Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, Williams (2008) framed the discussion of academic integrity in a slightly different and thought-provoking way: How have the issues of trust, betrayal and authorship inherent in plagiarism influenced the way educators view their students? When students lie and cheat, how does that impact teachers’ view of their students? What Williams (2008) called “the emotional impact of plagiarism” centered on the idea that even if “teachers would rather not be suspicious of their students…when teachers I talk with find that a student has been dishonest, their responses reveal betrayal, anger, and a visceral sense of disappointment” (p. 350). In his article about students’ perceptions of academic integrity in online versus live or face-to-face classrooms at the college level, Spaulding (2009) commented:

It is important for faculty to understand the differences in their own perceptions of academic dishonesty and the perceptions of their students because these
perceptions influence behaviour. Without this understanding, it is difficult to develop strategies that will successfully impact the problem of academic dishonesty. (p. 185)

He addresses a critical part of reflective practice: teachers should remain self-aware of how they present content because students could adopt perceptions and behave in accordance to what they see modeled in the classroom. If teachers do not serve as models of academic integrity, students could potentially reflect that perspective in their own views. Therefore, his research suggests that it is important for teachers to reflect on how they discuss the topic with their students before enforcing a strategy. Spaulding’s research is supported by a number of scholars who report on the instructor’s influence on students’ learning about academic dishonesty. Most studies on faculty engagement and response have been conducted in universities or colleges. Their findings, however, may be extended to high schools. For instance, in their 1999 study, Kerkvliet and Sigmund reinforced the findings of Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne (1997), and McCabe and Treviño (1996), who all made the connection between instructor impact and cheating. In their study on how to control cheating in classrooms, Kerkvliet and Sigmund (1999) noted that professors, who verbally announced that academic honesty is an “enforced university policy”, saw a 12% reduction in cheating on evaluations (p. 341). Whether it is mentioning academic honesty policies repeatedly to a class, or taking students aside individually to discuss matters of integrity, once teachers understand their own approach to the issue and how far they are willing to go to enforce it, strategies can be developed that meet the educational needs of the students and are not considered punitive or confusing to them.
**Academic Integrity in the Digital Age**

As Williams (2008) aptly acknowledges, plagiarism has been portrayed in some media as an “epidemic” and that the dishonesty of youth who lack morals is on the rise (p. 350-351). A survey of nearly 20,000 students and faculty at 11 post-secondary institutions across Canada in 2006 revealed that nearly three-quarters of first-year university or college students admitted committing one or more serious acts of academic dishonesty while attending high school (Hughes & McCabe, 2006). This study, carried out by the University of Guelph and Rutgers University, revealed that 73% of first-year post-secondary students admitted to “serious cheating” on written products while attending high school (Canadian Council on Learning [CLL], 2010, Forms of Academic Dishonesty section, para. 6). In the context of the research, “serious cheating on written work” was defined as plagiarizing by copying material from a written or Internet source without providing appropriate acknowledgment of the original source, fabricating or falsifying a bibliography or work cited, or submitting an essay written by a paper mill (CCL, 2010; Hughes & McCabe, 2006). Is there a lack of morality in society or are there other explanations that can account for academic dishonesty?

One explanation is that computer technology, such as word processing and easily accessible Internet, has provided “unethical students with new tools for their cheating activities” (Papp & Wertz, 2009, p. 2). This rationale, which is supported by Strom and Strom (2007), is becoming a ‘go-to’ explanation. In other words, cheating has become easier for those interested in finding a way. As Sisti (2007) remarked that plagiarism has “propelled to the top of the list of academic integrity infractions” (p. 218). This is supported by the findings of Stephens, Young and Calbrese (2007), who concluded that, although cheating has not solely become computer or digital-based, “digital plagiarism” or copy-paste plagiarism is becoming one of the more popular
types of academic offences. Two years after the International Center for Academic Integrity published its findings that “over 60% [of students] admitted to some form of plagiarism…about half of all students admitted they had engaged in some level of plagiarism using the Internet” (McCabe, 2005a). Sisti (2007) reported that of the 160 high school respondents he surveyed, 35% indicated that they had “directly copied and pasted material into an assignment without citations” (p. 221). Of these 57 students, 46% of them recognized that their action was plagiarism and considered cheating (Sisti, 2007, p. 221). In the digital world where access to information is literally a mouse click away, scholars, including Sisti, have noted that enforcing academic integrity and dishonesty has become increasingly complicated.

A possible explanation for the increase in violations of academic integrity is proposed in a study conducted in 2009 by Papp and Wertz. Their research addresses the culture of the digital age in which students are now learning, and how the convenience of online materials factors into this trend. Papp and Wertz (2009) concluded that their view of academic integrity has been influenced by their “culture of sharing” (p. 5). In fact, although 91% of the approximately 1,100 students surveyed on a university campus in the Southeastern US claimed that they were aware of the school’s academic integrity policy, 48% did not see “turning in work done by someone else” as serious cheating (Papp & Wertz, 2009, p. 3, 5). Sisti (2007) used his findings, which were similar to those gathered in the Papp and Wertz (2009) study, to categorize student participants into three groups: those who justified Internet or copy-paste plagiarism because they (a) had no time to do the paper/assignment on their own; (b) were unclear of policy in the school or classroom and the consequences; and (c) the “everybody’s doing it” mentality (Sisti, 2007, p. 224-225). Interestingly, students said they were not clear on policy despite the fact that the students were recruited from settings where “policy statements [about academic integrity and
plagiarism] were provided by teachers verbally, in syllabi, or on the Web” (Sisti, 2007, p. 225).

There is an apparent disconnect: Are the students falsely justifying their behaviour or were the policies not explained clearly? While explanations varied, a common theme in responses is summarized best by (Papp & Wertz (2009):

What is clear is that some students see academic integrity violation as a problem while others are not concerned. In the eyes of one student, the goal is to ‘pass at any cost.’ (p. 8)

If students are willing to take the chance of violating academic integrity codes to “pass at all costs”, would they be more likely to plagiarize in educational settings that are entirely held online instead of conventional classroom settings? Spaulding’s study (2009) concluded that students do not think academic integrity is less important to maintain in face-to-face courses than those conducted entirely online. His findings are supported by a study which compared online and traditional classroom settings and if academic dishonesty was perceived differently depending on the type of learning environment (Grijalva, Nowell & Kerkvliet, 2006). However, the data gathered from Spaulding’s (2009) 103 participants conflicts with other research that suggests students in online courses are more likely than students in traditional courses to view academic integrity as unimportant. This can be accounted for since the accessibility of online resource materials are always temptingly at the students’ fingertips (Carnevale, 1999; Kennedy, Nowak, Raghuraman, Thomas & Davis, 2000; Wang, 2008). The digital age has aided the ‘pass at any cost’ mentality by making resources more readily available, but there are students Sisti (2007) surveyed who recognized the importance of not copying and pasting someone else’s work and claiming it as their own. As one participant commented, “I try to understand everything I can about the paper, and I don’t learn anything by copying” (Sisti, 2007, p. 226). Still, teachers are
facing new challenges given the abundance of easily accessible digital content. As a result, plagiarism prevention programs like Turnitin have become part of the classroom routine.

Turnitin is a web-based software used by 126 countries and approximately 875,000 educators world-wide (Vanacker, 2011). The software is advertised as efficient for teachers because it produces Originality Reports and saves time checking phrases on search engines for possible academic dishonesty. As Williams (2008), Bishop (2006) and Royce (2003) discuss in their research, Turnitin is one of the most common plagiarism prevention services. Its unique software compares uploaded text to the content in its database of 12+ billion pages of digital content, in addition to 110 million archived student papers, and 80,000+ academic, commercial and professional publications and journals (Turnitin.com, 2010). Since it retains content, questions began surfacing about the legality of this practice, particularly when it came to student essays. In fact, the service came under considerable scrutiny in March 2008, when a lawsuit that had been filed against Turnitin.com and its parent-company iParadigms for $900,000, was dismissed by US federal court judge Claude Hilton. The four high school students who filed the lawsuit claimed that Turnitin was profiting from their work by making it mandatory for them to agree to their work being uploaded into the international database, and therefore, accessible around the world. In his decision, Judge Hilton stated to the court that “iParadigms’ use protects the creativity and originality of student works by detecting any effort at plagiarism by other students” and that the students’ papers do not have market value that would allow Turnitin to profit from them (Millar, 2008). This point of view was reaffirmed in April 2009 when the case appeared before an appeal court. The decision, once again, was that Turnitin’s storage of student work in an international database is “fair use” of student property and does not violate copyright
laws because, as Judge Hilton initially determined, the repository of essays “provides a substantial public service” (Millar, 2008).

One of Turnitin’s goals is to “quickly and effectively let [teachers] check all of your students’ work in a fraction of the time necessary to scan a few suspect papers using a search engine” (Turnitin.com, 2007). A discussion of the role of this service, but more directly its software, will follow; however, it is worth mentioning briefly how Turnitin is received as a strategy in classes. The contract-based service is endorsed by dozens of school boards worldwide; in fact, Ontario represents “the largest adoption of the complete Turnitin solution by a secondary education agency anywhere in the world” (Jenkins, 2010). As Carbone (2001) argues however, the strengths and conveniences of this technology are not outweighed by its drawbacks:

It assumes the worst about students and the worst about teachers. It assumes students have no honor [sic] and need always to be watched and followed electronically, a big brother welcome to academic traditions. It assumes teachers are too beleaguered and inept to design classroom assignments and practices that teach students how to write responsibly. Much of what Turnitin.com proposes to detect can be avoided by careful assignment planning and teaching….by paying better attention early on to students and the work they do. (Detection as Placebo section, para. 5-6)

While students have come to expect Turnitin in their classes, discussions of online literacy are continuing in academia. The results from a study based at Middlesex University Business School in the UK found that students felt PDS are beneficial in serving as a deterrent to plagiarism, but that it also affects student confidence and the overall quality of the learning experience (Dahl, 2007). This MTRP will contribute to that substantial body of literature insofar as
researching high school teachers’ perceptions of Turnitin as a tool for negotiating academic integrity. Respondents will be asked if the use of Turnitin and related software is an opportunity to teach students about integrity, or is its use in the classroom, as Williams (2008) would suggest, a poor pedagogical practice and a missed learning opportunity for teachers as well as students.

If an educator’s objective is to detect academic offences to ensure the integrity of the work produced, Turnitin is arguably more accurate than a teacher’s judgment, especially in a time when papers can be shared via email, be purchased from ‘paper mills’, or be pasted together from questionable or reliable sources without appropriate credit (Vanacker, 2011, p. 328).

In Vanacker’s (2011) comprehensive article on the effectiveness and use of PDS in education, he states that instructors and students, who may both be pressed for time, rely on computer technology to complete tasks more than previous generations (p. 328). However, time is also an issue for detecting violations. For instance, instructors who suspect plagiarism “might end up typing text into various search engines and databases, a time-consuming task that might be quickly abandoned when a stack of papers is waiting to be graded” (p. 328). Teachers’ understandings of Internet plagiarism are partly informed by their own experience and comfort level when using and researching digital content, as well as the sophistication of students’ knowledge in how to use technology to produce patchwork papers. However, if the teacher wishes to incorporate an online checking system, a PDS reduces the ‘guess work’ on their part. Yet, the digital age has presented an ethical concern regarding academic integrity in classrooms: If teachers use PDS, what message is that sending their students?

In his study on the trust and ethical dimensions of PDS in classrooms, Clanton (2009) argues that Turnitin has shifted the classroom dynamic: an entire class should not have to prove their innocence by submitting to Turnitin. To reference the title of Dames’ (2008) paper on
scholarly ethics in what he calls a “culture of suspicion”, Turnitin is to “Turn You In” (p. 23).
A few students may cheat and be caught by the software, but the innocent students are being seen as guilty until proven innocent (Clanton, 2009, p. 20-21). He states that PDS have been seen as necessary by many educators who say plagiarism is getting out of control and needs to be caught by the most efficient way on the market: plagiarism prevention or detection software. Countering that position, Clanton (2009) states:

I submit that trust, rather than suspicion, should be the default posture that teachers take toward students; unless we can reasonably suspect that particular students are cheating, we should trust them. (p. 23)

His argument is based on the premise that policies built on reverse onus harms the trust relationship between students and teachers. Although definitions of trust may vary, his point is valid: teachers and students are in professional, educational relationships, and both have duties, responsibilities and rights to one another. Treating each another with respect is one aspect, but respecting the efforts and contributions of the broader scholarly community in which both exist is another element. Approaching academic integrity and honour codes from the perspective that something as simple as citing a source means an active and willing participation in a larger network assigns a higher degree of trust to the student. This is in contrast to a relationship that is policed or vigilantly checked. Supporting Clanton’s argument, Vanacker (2011) states that a lack of trust damages the relationship. However, Vanacker disagrees with the notion that policing and enforcing norms damages the “kind of trust that governs our educational relationship” (p. 330). Rather, he views policing as beneficial “as it will strengthen confidence in the system” (Vanacker, 2011, p. 331). PDS is one of many ways to ensure that the norms of educational
institutions are not compromised; however teachable moments call upon teachers to exercise professional judgment.

As McCabe (2005b) reminds us, what is the educational value of a harsh sanction or repercussion for a student who is a first-time offender and has violated a citation rule in his or her haste to finish an essay? Harsh crackdowns do not have to be the response to every violation, but rather, viewing them as moments for student learning and opportunities for growth. As educators, is this a question of becoming a disciplinarian or a teacher? If students feel judged by “a machine operated by a third party whose workings they do not understand” (McCabe, 2005a), and the instructor uses the results of the software to determine guilt and issue a punishment, the direct effect on students’ views of academic integrity could be harmed. Students cite sources and credit scholars to not get caught by a PDS as opposed to citing because they appreciate the literature that has been published before them. One of the conclusions from a study by Dant (1986) may still apply in today’s digital age: if teachers provide conflicting feedback to students, then students are in turn unsure about expectations and are more likely to not take the topic the instructor discusses seriously. Therefore, if academic integrity or honour codes are explained clearly with a focus on the importance of taking pride of ownership in one’s work and crediting previously published scholarship as opposed to telling students to demonstrate academic integrity for the sole purpose of not facing serious consequences, then students would arguably understand why they should not commit those offences.

**Moving Forward: An Educational Opportunity**

As founding President of the Center for Academic Integrity, Donald McCabe is dedicated to researching honour codes and ethics. As he reveals in his 2005 article, he has observed “firsthand the continuous erosion in the ethical values of recent college graduates” (2005b, p. 26).
Due in part due to the tempting convenience of technology, he also cites how students feel the need to compete, meet multiple deadlines and achieve high academic performance. When their instructors and peer groups do not appear to take academic integrity seriously, they are also more likely to diminish its importance. Although the trend of students copying and not attributing the work was continuing, discussion has been shifting over the past fifteen years to include the role of faculty in maintaining standards on campus. He claims for instance, that students view faculty who “do nothing about what appears to be obvious cheating simply invite more of the same from an ever-increasing number of students who feel they are being ‘cheated’ by such faculty reluctance” (2005b, p. 29). Do schools have honour codes that teachers are expected to enforce? Is there consistency with repercussions students face? How does technology play a role in the teachers’ discussions of academic integrity? As one of McCabe’s (2005b) student-respondents succinctly summarized, “If faculty members aren’t concerned about cheating, why should I be?” (p. 29). My research investigates whether the six respondents enforce standards that McCabe comments may, generally speaking, be lacking.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The main research question of this study is: To what extent, and with what results for classroom practices, do Ontario secondary school teachers discuss and uphold academic integrity in English, History and/or Philosophy classes? To gather qualitative data, four semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with practising secondary school teachers, and a fifth interview was conducted with two teachers simultaneously. In total, six participants were interviewed for this study. Five respondents currently teach in a large, urban public school board and one teaches in a private Catholic secondary school. Given that research into a teacher’s daily practices and perceptions of this topic is exploratory, a flexible design structure, as opposed to a more quantitatively driven design, was selected. The interviews lasted between 30-50 minutes each and digitally recorded on a transportable audio device and were written using a smooth verbatim transcription style. All interviews were based on the same question set (see Appendix II) and conducted by the researcher. Locations for interviews were determined based on two factors: convenience for interviewees and low-traffic areas where the sound quality of the audio device would not be compromised.

Glesne (1999) outlines how the posture and probing questions of an alert interviewer can affect the outcome of the interview. In attempting to establish a rapport, the researcher used body language to engage the participants. For example, a slight lean toward the interviewee and eye contact conveyed active listening. Showing interest in what a respondent says can “demonstrate that you appreciate what you are hearing”, and thereby, prompt the speaker to continue (Glesne, 1999, p. 83). Furthermore, the researcher’s interest “shapes the respondent’s behaviour” and influences the length of the response (Glesne, 1999, p. 83). An additional recommendation from Glesne is the probe “Tell me more”, which demonstrates inquisitiveness on the part of the
researcher. Casting the interviewee as the expert in the discussion allows for effective facilitation of bi-directional communication. As noted by the researcher, allowing the participants to be the teachers – both figuratively and literally – had a positive effect on how they viewed their role during the interview. It was evident in their body language that the respondents appeared more at ease and relaxed when they felt they were speaking about a subject that the researcher could be ‘taught.’

The researcher’s purpose was to learn during these interviews, and the teaching role was likely a natural one for the six respondents given their experience with the topic of academic integrity in their courses. Convincing interviewees that the researcher is the learner and not the expert is a technique Glesne (1999) recommends when appropriate. Maintaining professionalism and respectful conduct, while communicating to respondents that you are an active “seeker of knowledge,” shifts attention from the researcher to the interviewee. This can have a direct impact on how comfortable respondents are in answering and providing details. The point of qualitative research is to gain information from participants, and the more data gathered, the potentially more fruitful the analysis.

As Wiersma (2000) proposes, data collection may be interactive or non-interactive depending on the degree of involvement the researcher has with participants. Interviews constitute an interactive method of data collection, which is an effective technique for a study that seeks to explore topics and gain insight into daily practices of teachers. In this setup, researchers adopt the role of a “participant-observer” rather than simply an observer (Wiersma, 2000, p. 201). Impromptu follow-up questions, anecdotes and probing questions asked during the semi-structured interviews were used to ensure clarity of responses and reduce miscommunication or misinterpretation. As recommended in literature on how to conduct qualitative research, the
question set was developed with a focus on varying between convergent and divergent question types (Mills, 2003, p. 59). The brief “Yes/No” responses were helpful for coding purposes since respondents’ views were explicit. The benefit of more divergent or open-ended questions provided respondents with the opportunity to elaborate on their perceptions of the topic. Open-ended questions have the inherent expectation that elaboration or description is encouraged.

**Data Collection & Coding**

The data collected from audio-recorded interviews was transcribed before being coded and subsequently analyzed for emerging themes. As stated by Dana and Yendol-Silva (2003), drawing conclusions from data is a systematic process that requires “careful scrutiny [because] findings do not materialize out of thin air” (p. 89). In order to keep track of the codes, as well as ensure that categories were not too broad, Hubbard and Power’s (1999) suggestion that no less than three and no more than six codes should be used was adopted. As the project developed, codes were added or removed, further demonstrating the organic nature of data analysis in the early stages.

As argued by Glesne (1999), sometimes the hallmark of a “good interview is not good conversation but good data” (p. 84). This is not always realized until the analysis begins. For this study, once the data collection and transcriptions were complete, the researcher began coding the results. Coding, which is a common process for analyzing qualitative data, involves the comparing and contrasting of information gathered before arranging the findings into categories (Schwandt, 1997, p. 16). The findings discussed in Chapter 4 make reference to some of the research mentioned in the literature review, with a focus on the experiences of the six respondents. The four main ideas that were prominent throughout the interviews and are explored in Chapter 4 include: (a) direct conversations with students; (b) role of technology; (c) assessment design; and, (d) impact of cultures.
The location and time of the interview were mutually determined by the researcher and the participants. Technology (overhead projector, television, laptop and PowerPoint screen) was not required. A table was needed for the audio recording device. While the interview was conducted, the researcher annotated the question set with comments. This procedure of taking notes during the interview can help capture what an audio device cannot, such as body language and impressions of the researcher. As more interviews were conducted and data compiled, connections between respondent comments and experiences that stood out to the researcher were annotated. The use of symbols, such as stars and exclamation points in the field notes as recommended by Mills (2003), assisted with ‘reconstructing’ the interview. These supplementary notations indicate responses that were evaluated at the time of the interview as warranting further investigation through probing questions during the interview and possible post-data collection analysis.

Although no participants withdrew from this study, all respondents were reminded prior to providing consent that they retain the right to withdraw at any time up to the submission of the final research paper. There was minimal risk associated with this project and no remuneration provided after the interviews. Participants were asked if they would be interested in receiving a final report. Each of the interviewees requested and received an electronic PDF of the report.

**Participants**

This study involves six practising secondary school teachers from both a public board and a private institution within the Greater Toronto Area. All six are held in ‘Good Standing’ by the Ontario College of Teachers. Participants were screened to ensure they taught English, History and/or Philosophy for at least one full semester at the secondary school level, and were also familiar with Turnitin.com. The screening question did not require respondents to actively use
Turnitin.com. Instead, the screening question was designed to select teachers who both recognized its purpose in courses and had come into personal contact with it as a professional at least once. Even if the teachers did not use the plagiarism prevention service, they still provided articulate opinions on how they viewed the ethical considerations that contribute to the debate over employing this service. Hence, to avoid narrowing the selection to a sample that was likely predisposed to endorsing the software, the screening question was kept relatively broad.

Participants who passed the screening were provided with a letter outlining the purpose of the study, the researcher’s background and an attached consent form (see Appendix I). Ten teachers were screened; six fit the aforementioned criteria.

As I wanted to have a conversation with these teachers from the standpoint of a professional and current student, I chose to not interview former Associate Teachers with whom I worked as a Teacher Candidate in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I personally felt that having a previous relationship during which I was being evaluated would make me feel like I was no longer in an ‘extended classroom’ scenario. I recognized that I would potentially have difficulty disassociating the connection from my new responsibility as an interviewer. In response to this reality, I sought out teachers with whom I had worked in either a professional capacity or individuals I had never met. Four of the respondents are teachers I knew as a student. Another participant is an individual I worked with in a professional working relationship. One of the respondents is an individual with whom I had no prior relationship. Although we had never met previously, she was recommended to me by a colleague at the University of Toronto.
Lucy Moore has taught English, History and Social Sciences in secondary schools in a public school board in the GTA for eight years. First-year teacher, Sarah Laurie, works at a private Catholic school and teaches a variety of grades 10 through 12 Social Sciences courses, in addition to grade 12 Philosophy. Kate Henderson is a teacher with twelve years experience instructing in a public school board. University English and grade-12 Writer’s Craft are among the many streams of English that she has taught and continues to teach on a regular basis. Natalie Williams has worked as an educator for more than a decade in a public board teaching English, business subjects, Co-operative Education, English as a Second Language (ESL), Special Education, and various Social Science courses. Lastly, Frank Pierce and Jillian Meyers, whose interviews were conducted together given time restraints, are both experienced English teachers in a public high school. Frank has taught for twelve years, and Jillian brings twenty-six years of insights to the conversation.

Ethical Review Procedures

Potential candidates were provided with a letter detailing the purpose of the study approved by the University of Toronto Office of Research Ethics, the contact information for the research supervisor and the voluntary consent form. The researcher reviewed the letter with the potential candidates to further explain the data collection process and confidentiality of the information gathered. In order to participate, the candidate had to sign, date and return the consent form to the researcher prior to the interview. Respondents were reminded to keep a copy of their written consent for their personal records.

The privacy of all participants remained protected through the use of pseudonyms for all names of persons, schools and school boards. No personal contact information that could compromise any party was collected or shared during the session. Confidential data collected
during this study are stored in a secure location and will be destroyed no earlier than five years after the successful completion of this study.

Limitations

The resources available on academic integrity, cheating and cultures of honesty in secondary and post-secondary education could not be fully explored within the time limitations of this study. Although the role technology plays in how academic integrity is discussed and enforced in Ontario classrooms is underdeveloped, there are many international sources that discuss the ethics of cheating and how students respond to codes of academic honesty at the university and graduate levels. Although not all of these resources could be included in this study due to two-year time limitation for both the Master’s program and the MTRP length of study, the material available is extensive and expanding due to the growing focus on how to combat plagiarism in an increasingly wired and interconnected world.

A consideration about applicability of generalizing findings is common to both quantitative and qualitative research (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998, p. 32). As outlined by Wiersma (2000), qualitative analysis allows for the perceptions of participants to be accurate “measures” and meaningful (p. 198). Although one of the main objectives of qualitative research is to gain insight into the practices and perceptions of teachers in relation to this topic, a drawback to this study is the limited qualitative data collection due to the small sample size. The data and analyses cannot be generalized to apply to a group larger than the respondent sample. The results from this qualitative study however, provide a base on which future research can build and expand. Wiersma (2000) indicates that, although researchers are not necessarily concerned with “a broad generalization of results”, external validity is a consideration. Comparability, as defined by Wiersma (2000), refers to the “extent to which adequate theoretical constructs and research
procedures are used so that other researchers can understand the results” (p. 212). The extent to which a study is translatable and accessible to other researchers assists in the comparability of the research.

A further limitation to this study was the narrowing of potential participants to those teaching English, History and/or Philosophy. Given the propensity for writing-intensive courses to have multiple assignments that require research and lengthy written products, the researcher asked if teachers were familiar with the use of Turnitin.com as a plagiarism prevention tool, and whether respondents discussed academic integrity with their students when essays, research papers and reports were assigned. This screening could have been altered to only interview individuals who used Turnitin.com, and therefore, gain valuable data into on why they use it and how they rate its value in the academic conversation. Since this research had a broader focus than the role of technology, the screening question was kept relatively unrestrictive. In future research, science literacy should be taken into consideration. How do discussions about academic integrity change depending on the subject or type of written work? Are plagiarized lab reports dealt with the same way and with the same scrutiny as plagiarized essays? These are questions that could be the foundation of future studies on this topic.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Five semi-structured interviews solicited the views of six practising Ontario secondary school teachers on the topic of academic integrity in humanities classrooms. The questions were designed to elicit perspectives on the discussion and enforcement of academic integrity, focusing on plagiarism. Sub-questions probed the influence of technology in shaping teacher-led discussions about academic integrity, in addition to teachers’ individual understandings of academic codes of conduct. Regardless of being from different schools, the teachers offered similar personal definitions of academic integrity. Respondents echoed Frank’s definition that violations of academic integrity are the “taking of somebody else’s ideas, words, thoughts, products and using them as your own” without proper citation or acknowledgment of the original source.

The teachers’ conceptualizations were critical in understanding how they defined a key term before moving forward with the interviews. Research into plagiarism avoidance by Soto, Anan, and McGee (2004) found that students, who received clear definitions about what constitute violations, were less likely to engage in dishonest acts. As Hughes and McCabe (2006) explained based on the survey conducted by the University of Guelph and Rutgers University, students’ perceptions of academic dishonesty often differed from that of their instructors. It was, therefore, important to establish the respondents’ personal understanding of academic integrity before inquiring how they made this definition explicit to their students. Each respondent detailed the importance of teaching students about academic honesty. When highlighting how to ensure that students and teachers are on the same page regarding expectations, as Sarah aptly phrased it, “Make sure it is clear and straightforward: transparent.” It was encouraging that respondents explained their definitions of academic integrity in concise language that could be easily
understood by secondary school students. As elaborated by Lucy regarding the presentation of her definition to her classes, “I try to put it in student language…we work through what it means and what it looks like.” Answers in a similar vein suggest that respondents’ definitions are accessible and outlined to students.

Once the necessary definitions were set out, the interview went on to address how academic integrity is discussed and enforced in the classroom. Findings were coded into four themes: (a) direct conversations with students; (b) role of technology; (c) assessment design; and, (d) impact of cultures.

**Direct Conversations with Students**

The teachers interviewed for this study mentioned the importance of explicitly defining academic integrity with classes at various points throughout respective courses. Each confirmed how their perceived expectations were made clear to students at the beginning of term and reinforced prior to assignments. In this respect therefore, definitions are not negotiated between teachers and students. Kate’s statement that “we always give them the plagiarism talk the first day” was supported by Natalie who agreed that addressing academic integrity took place at the start of a new course or term:

> We usually go through what plagiarism is. I give them a handout on academic integrity, then we do many exercises on how to properly document and what is not considered correct documentation just to make sure that everyone understands that anything that is not original or properly cited will be considered plagiarized. Approaches mentioned by other respondents included providing handouts, overheads, slideshows and hands-on activities about integrating quotations and using proper citation styles. Each respondent independently stressed the importance of being “up front” with students regarding
academic integrity standards, and more importantly, the support available to help students learn about maintaining honesty within their work. As Frank suggested, in addition to having sections of course outlines dedicated to plagiarism consequences and policies, “we have that whole table of handouts in the library about using sources, citing sources and crediting research.” Other interviews referenced extra support outside the classroom, and teachers stated that they encouraged these initiatives if students took advantage of them. On the whole however, teaching about academic integrity and plagiarism falls to the classroom teacher. Therefore, making tools accessible for students is beneficial, along with teachers being available for individual conferencing before or after school and during lunch. As Sarah stressed:

I know in public schools, because there are so many students in a class, it is very difficult to have that one-on-one time with students every day, every week, every two weeks, etc. It is asking a lot of the teacher, but try to make yourself available for conferencing. If the students weren't sure of something and were afraid to come to you to clarify, and then plagiarized and failed - it's a slippery slope. But if you took the 15 or 20 minutes to sit down and explain it to them…it might make a difference.

Even though some students may require clarification on certain points, all six respondents acknowledged that students generally understand what plagiarism is, and that citing sources is necessary for any thought, phrase or statistic that is not of their own creation or generation. Students’ perceptions and understanding of what academic integrity is, as well as how not to plagiarize, shape classroom conversations. Although clarification might be necessary at times, respondents generally agreed that students enrolled in Academic and University-level courses are generally well informed about plagiarism and what it means. Knowing what it is does not
necessarily translate to not committing the academic offence. As Natalie suggests however, students at the Vocational and Applied levels might be confused by the term academic integrity and what it entails. This could lead to avoidable cases of plagiarism:

I think you really have to break it down for them. I don't think they understand why it's such an issue. I think if you showed them that they can use their information and they just have to document it, then I think they understand it a little better. It's just showing them how to document properly.

Other teachers discussed how their ‘plagiarism talks’ rarely differed across subjects or grades, but that the frequency of reminders might be altered depending on the stream. For instance, Frank highlights how he repeats instructions on how to avoid academic dishonesty more often in Applied courses. Even though “the plagiarism talk is pretty much the same” and happens before assignments, learners might be prone to cutting and pasting answers because they are searching for the quickest way to complete a task, but do not realize why it is unacceptable. This is where a critical feature of a discussion on academic integrity has to take place: why is it unacceptable.

Kate and Jillian explained how their discussions with students about plagiarism forced those students to reconsider their views on the subject. As Kate elaborated:

I think students understand the meaning of academic integrity, but sometimes we use the word ‘honesty’ instead. We just tell them flat out that plagiarism is lying. I tell them the root of the word plagiarism. That comes from the word kidnapped or steal or something like that, they think that's kind of funny. Well, I say that is kind of what you're doing. You are stealing someone else's ideas and presenting them as your own. So I don't think they can fail to understand when we are so explicit
like that…. But you certainly have students who are just plain cheating with no hesitation. That shouldn’t be happening.

As Kate explained, plagiarism is the equivalent of lying and stealing. Teachers are versed in why students plagiarize: “students panic, or leave things to the last minute…we understand why you do it, but that doesn’t make it right.” Jillian echoes similar sentiments in describing how she opens a conversation about academic integrity in her classroom:

I tell them that I have a real issue with lying and cheating. They will get no leniency in any other way because I really have an issue with it. It’s a huge line to cross, too. They can do all kinds of things that I can forgive, but this is one thing that does not get out of my head. I can forget all kinds of things about somebody, but I’ll remember that.

For both teachers, plagiarism is more than just improperly citing materials. Plagiarism is engaging in an act that reflects on the character and choices of the student, which, as Lucy and Jillian explained, can be disappointing given that they believe teachers want students to succeed. In Lucy’s classes, she outlined assignments, and would “go over again what my expectations are in terms of academic integrity and how students can fulfill that.” Perceiving that students know they are lying, stealing and cheating appeared troubling to the respondents in this study.

As Sarah stated, conversations about academic integrity are important. They not only draw attention to the teacher’s expectations for assessments, but they also set the tone for the remainder of the semester regarding the expected conduct of the student. Specifically, she referenced student accountability and responsibility for their learning and quality of their final products. Natalie reinforced Sarah’s point, but also considered the student who repeatedly offends despite efforts to teach citation guidelines and their importance:
I did have several conversations after almost every assignment about students doing their own work. I think, maybe, that they thought I was nagging a bit perhaps, you know? While I did acknowledge or let them know through my grading that it was not acceptable, I think that a lot of them just took it as, ‘well, okay I got caught that time’ but I don't think it stopped them from thinking about doing it again because certain students continued to reoffend.

Although the interviews did not ascertain teachers’ views on character or moral education, their comments highlight concern for students’ morals and ethical standards. If students know what plagiarism is, but continue to consciously offend because they feel the consequences or risk is low, what does that say about them?

Some respondents clarified that conversations about academic integrity extend beyond what it says about the student and focus on how the act of plagiarism has a potentially harmful impact on others. Kate explains that she “does not think they’re doing it because they’re horrible people”, but rather, because they are not seeing the consequence of their actions beyond not including a footnote. It is the ‘bigger picture’ that Frank and Jillian both make a point of explaining to their classes. For example, they incorporate examples of public figures who have plagiarized and suffered consequences as a result of their actions. Lucy suggests that including guest speakers from university or college, who can speak to the enforcement of academic honesty, are invaluable to supplementing classroom dialogues about ethical conduct in scholarship. She said she often tells students that if they do not build skills from grades 9 through 12, then what are they going to do when they get to university? This line of thinking resonated with Frank’s explanation to students about who is affected by their plagiarism. He wanted to make them understand that their actions had implications beyond the classroom: “You’re doing it to your
friends sitting beside you; you’re doing it to me and my kids down the road; to anybody else in this building.” Recognizing that students can sometimes have difficulty understanding how their plagiarism impacts others, Frank explained how examples relevant to students, especially those in senior grades, can highlight who is harmed by someone’s violating of integrity at the high school level. In describing a scenario in which a student is applying to a university program, he said that regardless of how important a mark is for an application:

I’m not going to let her go on to Waterloo if she cheated and got 10% higher than the kid next to her who didn't cheat and whose ideas were not as good, but they were his or her own.

Although not in direct conversation with each other, respondents echoed sentiments similar to Frank’s in that they valued original thinking and even over-citing of sources over conscious cheating to get a better grade. Other respondents viewed enforcing academic integrity policies in their classroom as necessary to the learning process. If students reproduce work that belongs to another, then they are not learning independent and critical thinking skills. Therefore, in addition to having a potentially negative impact on others by cheating and taking spots in academic programs for instance, Lucy enforced that plagiarizing results in students not learning valuable writing and research skills that can benefit them regardless of career path or academic trajectory. Academic dishonesty, therefore, can also directly harm the learner.

**Role of Technology**

*Plagiarism Detection Software*

Of the six teachers interviewed for this study, two use Turnitin.com on a regular basis in their classes. Questions regarding plagiarism detection software (PDS) and this particular
Internet-based service however, were posed to all respondents. The differing opinions on the effectiveness of such software revealed a variety of detection techniques, including thoughtful assignment design. The focus of the following paragraphs is to present the findings that demonstrate the degree to which Turnitin.com factors into teaching and how teachers evaluate its use in deterring and catching plagiarism in humanities courses.

Respondents were divided on the use of Turnitin.com. Although studies have addressed the ethical basis for educator skepticism about Turnitin.com (Carroll, 2009; Green, 2000; Vanacker, 2011), for Kate, Turnitin.com is a program that she has yet to implement in her classes because she is a self-declared “technophobe.” When asked to explain why she did not use Turnitin.com, Kate explained that it was her lack of knowledge of how the software worked, not any ethical concerns. Interestingly, she mentioned that “younger teachers swear by it, and they have them [the students] do it for everything. And I think it’s a bit of a deterrent. I think the kids know if it’s on Turnitin.com, they won’t plagiarize.” Kate mentioned that she “sees the value in it, and I probably would like to try it if someone would show me.” As a result of not using a PDS, she has developed other ways to pick up on student plagiarism. Lucy, who shares Kate’s uncertainty about using Turnitin.com, preferred to discuss Turnitin.com as a useful “document keeper” as opposed to plagiarism detector. Natalie, who uses Turnitin.com on occasion, stated that she turns to the service when she is unsure of certain cases. She also stated that Turnitin.com has limited effectiveness because “students are getting smart now. They are not just taking things off the Internet. They will pay professional writing groups to write [papers] for them, and they write in such a way that it’s not on Turnitin.com.” However, Sarah’s situation differs in that she wants to use Turnitin.com, but her school has yet to acquire a license due to cost. She stated, “I would absolutely love to have it, but it is expensive.” For these teachers, Turnitin.com is not a
regular part of their assessment strategy. As such, they have developed other methods of plagiarism detection and proactive prevention.

Besides believing in the value of Turnitin.com, the two teachers who regularly apply this PDS pointed out that using software did not mean students were deterred and plagiarism did not occur. English teachers Jillian and Frank use Turnitin.com in each of their classes. Typical submissions to Turnitin.com are essays, research papers and summative evaluations. Both use Turnitin.com for work produced outside of class. As Jillian added, she knows of teachers who also use the software to screen notes, essay outlines, final essays, presentation notes and presentations themselves. Both Jillian and Frank acknowledged that students at their school anticipate the use of Turnitin.com because it is common among staff. This was described as an individual teaching initiative, and not a school-wide policy. For students in classes where Turnitin.com is not practised, Frank described the tempting nature of plagiarizing as “a Pandora's Box and they can't help but open it. It's so easy for them and most of the time there are teachers who do not detect when they do.” For Jillian and Frank, it is difficult to determine what impact Turnitin.com had on the output of their students, or how effective it is as a deterrent because they still encountered instances of plagiarism. Students who are used to it might not consider if it is influencing their approach to the assignment or course, but as Jillian recalled from her experience with Turnitin.com:

One of the things I found too is that there are always a few kids that get very scared by [Turnitin.com]. But there are also a couple kids who feel like you are not trusting them, and you have to say that research sort of supports this. This is why I'm doing what I'm doing. And I tried to convince them that it's not personal, it's just in case.
Jillian and Lucy both agreed that it would be natural for students, when confronted about plagiarism, to be defensive at first.

Lucy addressed the dynamics of the teacher-student relationship when plagiarism prevention software is used, and she extended it to academic integrity vigilance more broadly. Unlike Frank’s and Jillian’s situation where Turnitin.com was common among many staff and did not surprise students when announced at the beginning of new courses, she described an interesting shift in dynamic that may exist between teachers and students. Although Lucy does not use Turnitin.com, she described how she perceives students view classroom conversations about her attentive enforcement of consequences for dishonesty:

I think in terms of academic integrity, students see us [teachers] as out to get them. Do you know? I would say that, I don’t really like a “them” and “us” idea when I am dealing with students. I like the idea of us being on a journey of learning, which sounds corny, but that kind of idea. But I think that often students don’t think we understand why they cheat, and they think that we are kind of out to get them. It’s like I take great glee and pleasure in catching someone who is cheating, which to me puts a pit in my stomach. I hate it, but they think of it in other ways.

Part of this research study was to query the extent to which reverse onus influenced student output. Questions regarding this would require further investigation with student participants. These interview comments specifically regarding Turnitin.com suggest that the software may or may not be a deterrent. As Kate mentioned, Turnitin.com may have a deterring effect, but it is not the only way to detect plagiarism and teach students about academic integrity.
A component of this research project was to examine if secondary school teachers consider it appropriate pedagogical practice to use plagiarism detection software to enforce academic integrity in their classrooms. Is detection software, by virtue of its use, demonstrating teachers’ lack of trust for students? If so, how does this conflict with the principle inherent to discussions about integrity? If we, as teachers, are expected to cultivate a community of trust among contributors, then what message does employing plagiarism detection software have on the dynamic? As each of the participants reported, although the crux of the argument comes down to trust, using software is a personal choice and is used with the best interests of the academic community in mind. Despite her unfamiliarity with Turnitin.com, Kate suggested that a combination of high-tech and low-tech vigilance on behalf of the classroom teacher is necessary to “cover all your bases because you’re making sure that the final product isn’t plagiarized.” Vigilance, however it looks for practising teachers, is meant to protect integrity and student output, not negatively impact the relationship between teacher and student. This perspective was independently endorsed by Jillian and Frank. They concurred that Turnitin.com is effective, but is not the solution to dealing with academic dishonesty. As Frank admitted, “I don’t think if you just use Turnitin.com you’ll have good results. It doesn’t solve your problem.” He discussed how the software would identify if the student has plagiarized, but then it is the responsibility of the teacher to respond. When commenting on its overall value, Frank pointed out:

It may have some deterrent value and may catch some kids, but what do you do when you've caught them? Do you take any responsibility for that? Is it just their fault? Or do you look at yourself and think, ‘oh, did I forget something, or leave something out?’ I don't think teachers, overall, when I hear them talking, are
reflective enough about those cases. It's not about us saying, okay now if they plagiarize, they get zero. It's about what you tried to do before they put it in Turnitin.com.

All teachers interviewed for this study concurred with the idea that Turnitin.com – whether they used it or not – can be a detection tool. As Frank commented, “it’s a painting [broader canvas or picture] for me. I can’t separate [detection methods]. I think you have to do it all.” What each respondent alluded to was for teachers, both experienced and newly trained, to recognize what steps to take to prevent plagiarism and teach academic integrity in the first place, as opposed to relying on plagiarism detection software to be the sole teaching tool. If done in isolation, then the effectiveness of the software is reduced to a method of catching students who have not had instruction on how to avoid being caught and committing academic offenses.

*Computers, Keyboards and Cell Phones*

The comments from each respondent support the research that claims the ‘cut and paste’ method of essay writing is both convenient and tempting, and results in students plagiarizing course work (Bretag & Mahmud, 2009; Wang, 2008; Howard, 2007). When discussing his experience with Applied and College-level learners, Frank reflects that many are task-focused and capable of strong academic output, but the tendency is to complete a task as quickly as possible. The Internet has made this process of task completion much easier, but the students are not seeing the consequences of their cutting and pasting:

They have no idea what they’ve cut-and-pasted half the time unless you sit down and say ‘what does this mean? How does it answer the question?’ People say, ‘Should you be assigning that cut-and-paste question?’ Well no, I don't assign cut-
and-paste questions. But even for the thinking questions, they'll cut-and-paste something thinking that it fits without realizing that it doesn't. So it's important that they realize that it is unacceptable.

It can be beneficial for students to have a variety of Internet-based resources and modules available at their fingertips, but online access has rendered lessons on citing and critical thinking increasingly necessary. Supporting Frank’s contention that students are members of “the generation of getting it done as fast as possible [and] not necessarily paying attention to how it’s done”, Jillian agreed that students may Google something and paste a block of text into their essay without stopping to consider more effective ways to find valuable or valid information. These perspectives are consistent with a national survey of U.S. students, grades 7 through 12, conducted by Common Sense Media, a San Francisco based non-profit organization founded in 2003. Common Sense Media’s mission statement summarizes its commitment to study the effects of technology and media on youth and families. In its report, 52% of students admitted to some form of Internet-enabled cheating, with 38% admitting to cutting and pasting material from websites and submitting it without proper citations. Sarah added, “Given my experience, it is very simple to just cut and paste from Wikipedia, and they don't understand what the problem is.” Kate ventured to suggest that plagiarism cases are likely steady over time, but what has changed is the avenue of dishonesty. Instead of going to passages in scholarly written texts, students are turning to computers. When discussing novel assignments and essays, she acknowledged that students are more tempted to consult online resources and put little extended thought into the content of their novel, as opposed to spending time thinking about their own views on the text. For all the teachers in this study, conducting credible online research is unanimously encouraged
and recognized as part of curricular programming. It is when students claim those ideas as their own however, that academic dishonesty becomes an issue.

Technology has benefits and drawbacks, but for the purpose of teaching content, citation and research skills, it can be an invaluable resource. As Lucy reflected, “students think in terms of technology. When you get an essay that is typed from a student lab versus handwritten, their thoughts are way more developed. They were able to see ideas more clearly because that is how they think.” Her claim that students are keyboard thinkers was supported by Sarah, who said that students are so comfortable using technology, that accessing information is mostly done online. Natalie endorsed the blending of technology with student learning:

I think that technology has become a part of the classroom. It is just such an integrated part of teaching now but I don’t think they see it is unusual. Maybe 10 years ago; but now, I think it's a given. I think they tend to expect more technology in the classroom.... If [assignments] are on the computer and online and are done in an interactive way, it might hit home a bit closer. It might sink in a little bit more.

Natalie also reflected on how discussions about academic integrity are essential because technology has made plagiarism more of an issue. By way of example, Kate had an interaction with students that highlights a shift from simply cutting and pasting to plagiarizing using mobile devices. For her, cell phone use has made discussions about the interplay between academic integrity and the role of technology worth considering. The notion of cell phones becoming plagiarism-enabling tools has been supported by national survey results of American students in grades 7 through 12 (Common Sense Media, 2009). This study shows that 35% of high school students admitted to cheating at least once with the cell phone, and that 26% of these same
students have stored notes on their phones to consult during exams. In addition, 25% of high school students revealed that they texted friends for answers during evaluations, 20% had actively searched the Internet for answers, and 17% had taken pictures of exam questions to send to friends (Common Sense Media, 2009). While Kate admitted that students have used phones to assist with active reading notes and looking up unfamiliar words, she explained how texting has impacted assessments. She cautioned that cell phone use requires scrutiny from the classroom teacher because students can have Internet access on their phones, and will text message articles or phrases copied off websites to each other:

If you are not watching, and you pose the [test] question asking about Hamlet's desire for revenge, someone could look it up and share that information and everyone is suddenly writing about the same thing. Like, the example of the killing of the father. They could write a whole paragraph when it's not really their idea.

In-class plagiarism, facilitated by cell phones, is not unique to Kate’s experience. When students are allowed to bring technological devices to class, Jillian felt that it would sometimes turn into a situation of “brining your own distraction” because students are not using them for appropriate research or note taking. During the interview, Frank established how he believed technology can help students in many ways, but its repeated misuse regardless of teacher-led instruction about appropriate online conduct and academic integrity has led him to question if the benefits outweigh the drawbacks:

No matter what we do to prevent plagiarism, I don't think we’re catching it. I'm having a hard time convincing myself that all the benefits of having technology in the classroom outweigh the downfall of it. Shorter attention spans, unable to focus
on things, to listen to people talking, which is what they're going to have to do later on…. There is no long-term thinking or goal or focus because it's impossible to have that now. We live in a society that is exactly that way. Give me something now, I'll do it and I'll feel better; one thing at a time is students’ thinking, but what about five years from now?

Using technology, like plagiarism prevention software, to catch plagiarists is one method of deterrence, but as Jillian questioned, if students alter products just enough to be undetected, then software would have to have built-in intuition. In other words, software would have to channel the abilities of the student’s teacher who is familiar with the product typically submitted by the learner. Until then, both technology and plagiarism prevention software have a role to play in the humanities classrooms at the secondary school level. It is the discretion of the teacher, however, that determines the prominence of software such as Turnitin.com and the presence of technology in their courses.

**Assessment Design**

Consistent across interviews is an acknowledgment that technology can positively enhance student learning when used appropriately, but that it can also result in students plagiarizing online content and presenting it as their own without citations. In response to this reality, the majority of respondents report conducting an increasing number of in-class assessments and scaffolding of research papers. Furthermore, requiring students to submit process work, as opposed to receiving a final paper without the ‘in between’ stages, allows tracking of students’ thought development. As Frank pointed out, Turnitin.com can only be effective to a certain extent. The proactive instruction about how to be academically honest and why it is important must also occur. Therefore, in tandem with plagiarism detection software, Frank and
Jillian employ strategies that their fellow participants who do not actively use Turnitin.com employ. The other four respondents used similar strategies of thoughtful assignment design to reduce potential dishonesty; namely, scaffolding of assessments as and of learning.

For the most part, academic integrity is enforced through the explicit instruction on how to cite sources, create bibliographies and paraphrase or summarize materials. However, a focus in all six interviews was on thoughtful assessment design as a method of both preventive measure and detection of academic integrity violations. Lucy explained that “the scaffolding we do for an assignment allows us to weed out a lot of plagiarism.” She described this process as requiring student submissions of notes and essay outlines for the duration of the assignment. Furthermore, she believed that the best advice she could give new teachers is to break down assignments into sections instead of having large assessments. Spacing out the essay writing process over a number of days and providing descriptive feedback on the parts students produce in class are two of the most effective strategies she employs in her classroom. When she sees the step-by-step process, students are less able to plagiarize and get away with it. Also, if students consciously or unconsciously omit citations from their work, scaffolding check-in points will ensure the issues are brought to the students’ attention before submission of the final product. As a result, students can avoid receiving a zero for a plagiarized essay since their lack of citations was caught earlier in the process.

Lucy's strategies are also practised by each of the other respondents. They explicitly referenced how intuition and professional judgment played a role in their teaching practice. For Natalie, providing students with "mini writing exercises so I can get a feel for how they write" allows her to pick up on plagiarized assignments. This strategy was echoed by Frank, who
recommended to novice teachers that one of the most effective ways to enforce academic honesty is to know the writing abilities of your students:

Get kids to write things at the beginning of the year. Keep that piece of writing in a folder…compare it to anything they hand in. When there is a stark contrast between what they handed in to you and what's coming out in their assignments.

Frank also referenced triangulation as a viable method of effective enforcement of academic integrity in his classroom:

…have them explain things to you. The good thing about that, I am not sure if you’re familiar with the term triangulation of data, but the good thing about that is talking to kids and realizing that they really have no idea or they really do understand what they’ve said to you. Because I have often pulled a kid aside, and said this is what you wrote down, tell me what you know about it. Here, answer these three questions. Tell me what this means, you wrote it down. They have no idea.

Along with triangulation – the connection between product, observations and conversation with students – Natalie added that the peer editing piece can be a helpful part of the scaffolding process. It can hold peers accountable and give students an opportunity to proofread each other’s work. If students noticed plagiarized content, they may point it out to their classmates and, therefore, influence the initial choice and conduct of the student who attempts to cheat. Moreover, incorporating group work into academic integrity instruction could be a helpful practice:

You could start with three different sets of examples of someone who has properly documented, someone who did not do as well, and someone who has just
plagiarized. Have them sit at different tables so they can look at [them] and try to discuss which one is right, which one is not. I think that might help as well.

While peer editing might be an option, Kate supported the effectiveness of enforcing honour codes through in-class activities. She claimed that if students are given a prompt and asked to write about it during class time, there is an authenticity to the student’s work because the thoughts and phrases are likely original to the student. This view is illustrated in an example from her own experiences:

I tell them, here's your in-class essay topic. You have five days, you're allowed to bring in your notes and your book, but you have to keep everything in the classroom. Everything you produce… We go through their notes, and we initial their notes so they can't some days sneak in other notes. If it doesn't have our initials on it, then it's problematic.

The idea of focusing on the process work is similar to the ideas explained during Jillian’s interview. As she phrased it, “it's more important than the final product because generally that's where you learn.”

Although the majority of participants endorse scaffolding as effective teaching practice, concerns were raised regarding the extent to which this should be practised. As Lucy pointed out, if scaffolding is used to such an extent, are students going to be able to write complete essays when asked to do so? Or, as she queried, will the opposite occur in humanities classes: “I don’t know how long the essay is going to last.” Kate expressed similar thoughts on how scaffolding has rendered the formal research essay splintered into fragments and not handed in as a comprehensive whole. She explained that, even though a piecemeal paper or timed in-class essay will not be as polished if they were written outside of class, keeping students in a space where
they are forced to think and generate their own perspectives and feelings about an essay topic is
arguably more effective than sending work home. As Kate said, “If they have more time and
don’t go online, and just sit there and think and refine, they probably will do a better job.”

An issue that exists with in-class techniques of enforcing academic integrity standards is
potentially over-scaffolding. Expanding on her idea, Kate acknowledged that, although in-class
assessment can be helpful, she has noticed a dramatic change in the type of assignments issued in
English classes partly in response to plagiarism:

We don't do a Hamlet research essay anymore, and that's a shame in English. We
don't really have them do research essays – ever. They do research for their
presentations, but I think it's a shame. I just had to turn it into
a regular in-class essay.

Sarah and Frank shared Lucy's and Kate’s concern that research essays produced outside of class
might become increasingly rare. This does not mean, however, that essays are being phased out.
Sarah believed that, for senior grades, different hand-in dates for parts of an essay are not
appropriate. Students should be trusted to scaffold and time-manage their essay completion and
come for extra assistance, if necessary. She drew upon her experience in an academically-focused
school where the majority of students are proceeding to university, but her sentiments were
supported by Frank, who commented on the danger of students in various streams becoming too
accustomed to scaffolding as a way to reach an objective:

Kids have a lot of interesting things to say, and they blow my mind quite often
when I think of how I read something and think, ‘wow, this kid is better than me.’
That does happen, and you have to be open to know when that will happen. […]
But you're never going to have a job where somebody is going to break down
each task that you do and assess that one task. Like, if you fix car - did you take the wheel off correctly? Now, can you put the wheel back on correctly? That's silly. It's can you fix this problem or not? Can you do this or not?

Seeing what students can produce when given a task as opposed to scheduling check-in points and conferences can be a way for them to learn other life skills besides writing and research. Moreover, respondents introduced the idea that if students are producing excellent process work, then the final product, too, should reflect the same standard. As each of the respondents independently alluded to in their interviews, they offer assistance to students, schedule conferences, recommend lunch-time peer tutors and before/after school support, but if students do not take advantage of it, then scaffolding can result in weak process work and final products.

Plagiarism to avoid lower grades is still a possibility despite a scaffolded approach; the latter may, however, make the act of being academically dishonest easier to detect earlier on in the process. As Natalie said, in these teachable moments, students can then receive instruction on how to maintain academic integrity. She provided an example of how she approached a student who she knew plagiarized an essay, and demonstrated how these moments can turn it into a learning experience:

I said, ‘I appreciate you standing here and admitting that you didn't do this work yourself.' I explained when he moves on to university, stuff like that could be a serious infraction for him and could stay on his record. It could go on to affect his credibility when he gets into the workforce. It wasn't worth much as an assignment, but I thought the dialogue we had hopefully left an impression with him that he would not then do that again.
When asked if she regretted not giving him a zero, she explained that her reaction was partly informed by her own philosophy of education, as well as the culture of her school:

“We are there to teach.”

**Impact of Cultures**

*School Culture: Policies, Procedures and Professional Judgment*

A frequent question posed in this field of research is why students engage in academically dishonest behaviour. Literature cites that the desire to achieve higher grades drives students toward this morally questionable conduct. Another factor is the perception of the educational environment being low-risk: misconduct, if detected, is not responded to with a potentially serious penalty. Research supports that students’ academically dishonest choices are made when they perceive their instructors as lenient and the consequences as minimal. Respondents reinforced how school culture plays a role in shaping how academic integrity is viewed and enforced. Varied responses from the six respondents confirmed that reaction to plagiarism and academic dishonesty differs from school to school, but that teachers are typically encouraged to exercise judgment in dealing with their students. These reactions are contextual and call on the teacher’s agency regarding how to proceed. As Kate mentioned, there is no standard response to guide teachers on how to react to plagiarism. Expanding on this point, Lucy explained how professional judgment comes into play when addressing plagiarism cases and assigning marks. Considering the chain of command in her school, she explained:

It is kind of left to your own. I mean, if a parent went to admin, then the conversation would have to happen – in terms of ‘Well, we know in practice other people have been given a second chance. Are you willing to give them a second
chance?’ - that kind of thing. So what the policy is at my school for grade 9s and 10s, it’s a light slap. ‘You know, you shouldn’t do this, etc’, you usually give them a second chance. Especially if it’s a first time, you consider that. But in grades 11 and 12, you’re looking at something more serious.

It was apparent during interviews that independent departments do not have specifically designed codes of conduct that compel colleagues to react a certain way when students plagiarized in their classes. For instance, if a student was proven to have plagiarized an essay, the classroom teacher was not obligated to immediately contact his or her parents. Even if protocol encouraged bringing the incident to the attention of administrators, the teacher’s professional judgment was emphasized. This did not result in teachers functioning in silos, however. In some of the scenarios outlined by respondents, teachers worked in concert with administration, students and their families to discuss consequences and courses of action. Echoing Lucy’s point about teachers using professional judgment and not having approved department-wide reactions, Sarah elaborated on her school’s policy and the way conversations would involve action of administrators:

I was not comfortable giving her a mark for it, and I made that quite clear to the administration, and they supported me. In the school policy, it does dictate that a mark of zero may be assigned…. I think it really does depend on professional judgment on the part of the teacher because they are in class with the students every day.

Her school, which she describes as a “university preparatory school where there is a high level of academics placed on the girls…they need to be accountable”, treats plagiarism as an important issue and deals with it “very seriously.” The examples provided were of students receiving zeros
for plagiarized assignments. As Sarah recognized, students at her school understand the meaning of academic integrity because of the emphasis placed on it. She questions if this school dynamic extends beyond her setting, and she addresses the impact on students if teachers do not stress the importance of academically ethical conduct to students:

I think it may be a sort of ‘joke’ to them. I think it depends on the culture of the school. If it is based on preparing students for later academic careers, I think they take it a little more seriously. But it really depends on how it is positioned to them. In some cases, they may think it's great, but if it is not shown due respect [by staff], then I don't think the students are going to be as receptive to it.

Her point about the importance of teachers taking academic integrity seriously in order to promote similar behaviour among their students reflected Frank’s and Jillian’s views that teachers should model ethical behaviour by citing sources used in lessons or lectures. Both recommended that teachers cite facts or quotations they read from written and online sources in order to model the desired behaviour. This would be one way of ensuring that students ‘see’ academic integrity in action and, therefore, cannot claim to be ignorant of the practice and how it ‘looks’ in their classroom. This notion was endorsed by other respondents who highlighted that part of discussing academic integrity was the physical modeling of citation practice for students. For Natalie and Jillian, it was acknowledged as a matter of practising what one preaches in the classroom in order to teach students about integrity.

Individual teacher reactions to violations can still be effective if the consequences are explicit and consistently applied, but the interviews revealed that students anticipate second or third chances, and that intervention by administrators would result in the opportunity to redo an assignment. Involvement of administrators was repeatedly mentioned by respondents as a step in
the process. Expanding on how the chain of command works within their school, Frank and Jillian acknowledged that guidance counsellors and the administrators might be involved in the conversation with a student about academic integrity violations, but the response is often to give the student another opportunity to submit the paper. Jillian and Frank independently struggled with this reality because they question whether letting a student redo an assignment is a legitimate consequence:

F: Overall, there's a push in our board to let kids redo things. If they plagiarize, let them redo this, redo this, and redo this. I just don't have the time to look at it again and the time for them to do it again. They just get more stressed out and plagiarize more. It doesn't help; it's not a good solution.

J: And if we're supposed to be preparing them for the world outside of school, I don't think you get a chance again in the so-called real world to do things again.

The overwhelming consensus is that independent professional judgment factors into how plagiarism cases are dealt with at the secondary school level, and that administrators might be consulted to oversee the details of the specific incident. Some cases do not need to be brought to the attention of administrators because, as Kate discovered, “If I can show them what they handed in and what I found online and that they have taken a whole paragraph but they didn't [cite] it properly, then they have no defence. And they just accept it, they generally never argue.” For habitual occurrences, students may face suspension. Students may also receive a zero on their plagiarized work. What became evident across the interview transcripts, however, was the context-specificity of how academic dishonesty consequences are discussed. Professional
judgment is significant in determining how consequences are enforced. Conversations about
codes of conduct in humanities classrooms are not, as Lucy said, “black-and-white.” These results
may support literature that states if the environment of the school is perceived as low-risk, with
consequences that are light or minimal, then student infractions are likely to occur.

_Diversity of Students’ Cultural Backgrounds_

One of the sub-questions associated with this study is how teachers perceive students’
understanding of academic integrity. Four of the six interviewees explicitly mentioned the impact
of culture on the students’ understanding of academic honesty, as well as the discussion and
enforcement of academic integrity in the classroom. Many students arrive in Canada from
cultures where rote memorization, or knowledge seeking for the purpose of being academically
competitive, and minimal emphasis on source accreditation are stressed. These transplanted
practices can result in challenging discussions about what it means to be academically honest and
why consequences exist in Canada’s education system for violations of academic integrity.
Lucy recalled a conversation she had with parents about their child's plagiarism. Both recent
immigrants, they became defensive when explaining to Lucy that in the country from which they
moved, the idea of ‘knowledge seeking’ is commonplace. As Lucy recounted:

> It does not matter where you get the information, but being able to regurgitate
> information is what is most important. So, the parents really couldn't understand
> why an essay that was half written by somebody else was unacceptable because
> their son had gone and found the information, plunked it in, and used it to his own
> purpose. The student can’t understand why that wasn't what I wanted.
Academic integrity is the area where Lucy believes disconnect exists between culture and the education system and standards of practice in her board. Whether the parents or the students are recent immigrants is not the only consideration when addressing this disconnect. Frank commented that he had “cases of parents who [said] that their students’ opinions are less important than someone else's, so they've told them to use someone else's opinion. But without crediting.” Kate, who has experienced similar situations as Lucy in discussions with parents and students about knowledge seeking versus independent critical thinking, pointed out how the cultural gap, evident with English Language Learners (ELL) and English as Second Language (ESL) students, further complicates how discussions and enforcement of academic integrity codes of conduct take place in humanities courses. Kate highlighted this “grey area” by describing the situation experienced by a colleague with an ESL student who incorporated lines from a famous poem into her work without quoting it:

She really should have gotten zero, but it was a good kid who just misunderstood. The ESL kids really struggle with that. They really don't quite get it. They're like, ‘what do you mean? I didn’t know that [information in the essay]. I learned it on a computer. Now I understand it. I showed you I understand it. Now I'm getting a zero? I don't understand.’ So they are probably the ones who struggle most with the understanding of academic integrity.

These findings are consistent with the growing body of literature investigating cultural impacts on academic honesty. The comments from respondents support research conducted by Buranen (1999) who addressed how cultural differences influence understandings toward the idea of “borrowing” and “ownership of ideas or of a text” (p. 66). Although her study focused on student attitudes, the cultural perspectives of parents play significant roles in conversations about
academic integrity and plagiarism, particularly when their child is informed that they committed an offense.

Kate drew a connection between culture and academic integrity during this segment of her interview while discussing interactions with parents. “Sometimes there is a cultural issue and you have to explain academic integrity to parents,” she explained. Further:

I've heard that in some countries that's how they learn; they regurgitate facts and are not valued for independent ideas. So there's kind of two things working in my school: there's the pressure to do well, and there's the pressure perhaps when coming from a different culture or country where the education system is totally different.

In her experience, Kate described positive relationships with parents who may not have been raised in the Canadian educational environment, but understand their children are held to different expectations. To quote Kate, “they understand that they are in Canada and this is what the Canadian teachers expect.”

Jillian explained that in her twenty-six year career, there is a cultural element that factors into conversations about academic integrity. Jillian suggested claiming unfamiliarity with the cultural and linguistic practices within the Canadian education system is less acceptable now than it used to be because there are currently so many resources available and repeated reminders of how to cite sources accurately before submitting work. As she acknowledged:

I want to believe that it's because they don't know but I know they know. And they just don't want to put in the work or don't see any other option. They do it anyway because it's easy.
She added that the other important piece to this cultural component, which was also discussed by Natalie and Kate, is that the pressure from parents for their child to perform well trumps academically ethical practice. Jillian's experience with seemingly mark-focused and driven parents provided insight into how the culture in which the child is raised influences academic honesty:

My experience would be much more 80:20; 80 parents against you and 20 parents for you. I know parents who have come in and yelled at [guidance] counselling because I've sent their student who plagiarized down to the office. They've been aggressive and abusive to the counsellors because they didn't think it was fair. I was ruining their son’s chance of getting into university. […] Sometimes I don't think the parents care if their kids plagiarize. All they care about is the mark because their daughter or son is going to be ‘fill-in-the-blank’ career wise. And I, as their teacher, am the one getting in the way if I do anything about their plagiarism. They will say something like, ‘oh yes, she is very sorry or he is very sorry but please, please: do you not understand? Have you no compassion?’

Although not limited to one culture, parental pressure was cited during informal follow-up correspondence with interviewees as something experienced particularly by the South and East Asian student population. Frank reported that the particular pressure to secure successful admittance to a university program influenced his discussions about codes of conduct with parents whose son or daughter has plagiarized and violated the school’s integrity policy:

Yeah, ‘they won’t do it again’ or ‘give them another chance.’ Oh I've had that. I've had the, ‘you are doing this to her.’ […] It's a 60:40 thing. Some parents are, ‘okay, yes he’s done this before and we've told him not to do it, and we don't
know why he chose to do it again.’ But most of the time it's just ‘no, no he didn't do it and you're wrong; can you prove it?’

In addition to cultures that have different practices regarding research and citation rules, parental pressure on students to perform, even if grades are unethically achieved through plagiarizing, has influenced the way respondents discuss and uphold academic integrity in their humanities courses.

These interviews identify how the culture of a school, as well as the cultural background of its students, impacts how teachers experience and understand violations of academic codes. Participants explained that school environments, where consequences for reported violations are ‘light slaps’, affect the discussion about academic codes of conduct. When administrators encourage the professional judgment of their staff, it could be viewed as a supportive vote of confidence, or it could be regarded as a lack of standardization upon which students capitalize. As Sarah expressed in her interview, the actions of the students can reflect the culture of the school. If the school prides itself on university preparation and academic honesty, then the actions and organization of the administrators and teachers must reflect this mandate.

As the interviewees in this study observed, it can be especially important to clearly identify expectations for student responsibility and initiative regarding referencing expectations when cultural diversity factors into the conversation. Participants explained how international students or English Language Learners have different understandings of citations. Making instructions and consequences explicit can provide parameters and regulations for students new to the system. Furthermore, with resources available online, and information on referencing readily accessible at schools to guide students through various citation styles, students cannot claim ignorance whether they are new to the Ontario educational system or not. Teachers can anticipate
comments from parents attempting to defend their child’s plagiarism as the result of a lack of awareness rather than an absence of morality and work ethic.

**Summary of Findings**

The interview data yielded results that demonstrate how academic integrity discussions influence daily classroom procedure and teacher practice. Participants explained how direct conversation takes place before assignments and with particular students after plagiarism has been caught or suspected. But there are other elements the participants incorporate into their dialogue about academic honesty. In response to experiences with plagiarism for instance, assessment design was frequently mentioned as a necessity to help deter some cases. Scaffolding and chunking assignments, along with clearly outlining where to go for citation and reference support, were highlighted as preferred preventive measures. These have a dual benefit because they allow teachers to monitor the originality of in-class written products, while also assisting students by breaking down tasks into manageable pieces. Even when plagiarism prevention software, namely Turnitin.com, was used to check assignments for breaches in academic conduct, participants emphasized the invaluable exercising of professional judgment to uphold the integrity of the students in humanities classes.

Consideration of mitigating factors was particularly relevant when understanding of referencing expectations was influenced by the academic culture of another educational system or the student’s cultural background. Respondents identified international students, ELLs, and students from South and East Asia as having challenges understanding the reasoning behind citing original authorship. Participants acknowledged that although different cultural standards for academic integrity and parental pressure to achieve high marks have been imported into classrooms, the practices in their respective courses uphold the Canadian education system
standards for academically honest engagement with scholarly material. Taking into consideration the main themes extracted from the findings, final conclusions, implications of this research and suggestions for future investigation will be explored in the concluding chapter of this study.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In addition to cases of plagiarism and academic violations being well-documented at the elementary, secondary, post-secondary and graduate levels, similar unethical conduct has also become increasingly common in the workplace. This research project focused on how secondary school teachers discuss and enforce academic integrity in their humanities classes, but many of the participants explained how the act of plagiarizing could have far-reaching consequences. They explained their practices, which included professional judgment, use of plagiarism prevention software and thoughtful assessment design. One of the findings takes the dialogue beyond the teacher-student level, and probes the roles played by administrators and parents in facilitating conversations and following through when academic violations are reported.

As scholars in this field have documented, even when individuals know the risks, plagiarism occurs for a number of reasons, such as being rushed for time and feeling the need to achieve a higher grade. As the results of this study have found, there are practical ways that teachers can respond to plagiarism in their classrooms in order to promote honesty and protect the interests of those students who demonstrate moral behaviour. Taking into consideration the opinions and experiences of the six participants in this study, these teachers articulated ideas that provide a base from which to launch further studies into this area, in addition to investigating how education policies can play a role in framing the dialogue. This final chapter begins by revisiting the research question, addresses the implications for current teaching practice, and concludes with steps for future study into academic integrity codes.

The central question guiding this investigation is to what extent, and with what results for classroom practices, is academic integrity discussed and upheld by Ontario teachers in secondary school humanities courses. In order to ascertain a clearer sense of how the data generated from the
six interviews answered the overarching research question, this section is divided into two parts. The first addresses the extent to which academic integrity was discussed in courses, and the second part focuses on the results of upholding academic integrity and how those actions influenced classroom practices. The sub-questions associated with this project are also expanded upon throughout both sections: (a) To what extent does technology influence teacher-led discussions about academic integrity? and (b) How do teachers perceive students’ understandings of academic integrity? The following section will elaborate on the findings from this study and draw conclusions based on the identified themes.

**Discussions about Integrity**

Overall, the extent to which respondents go to inform students in their humanities classes about academic integrity is thorough, repetitive and accessible to students through a variety of oral and written communications. Examples of classroom practices include printing definitions and school policy on course outlines, discussing assessment expectations at the start of a term, and issuing referencing reminders before assignments. According to the participants in this study, academic integrity is discussed regularly with students in humanities classes, and direct conversations take place repeatedly throughout the semester. As Lucy mentioned however, sometimes the language in which school policy is phrased can be too complicated for students to fully appreciate, so the conversations about academic dishonesty are often broken down into what she referred to as “less education jargon, and more student-friendly language.” As a few of the respondents offered, sometimes defining academic integrity by what it is not is more effective. For instance, one option was to tell students that academic integrity means not lying or cheating, rather than framing it as upholding the integrity of scholarly contributions. The other respondents confirmed that students who are unclear of what constitutes academic integrity have opportunities
to learn by either asking their teachers or seeking support from in-school libraries or online resources. The teachers in this study therefore, perceive students’ understanding of plagiarism and academic integrity as clear enough to comprehend the ethical violation of breaching academic codes of conduct. As the majority of participants mentioned, even for students who are unclear about referencing materials, the excuse of “not knowing” is no longer regarded as valid in most cases because enough discussion has taken place in courses to negate this excuse.

Participants were forthcoming about the frequency with which they discussed academic integrity and plagiarism with their students. Regardless of grade or level, teachers explained the importance of being honest about products submitted for credit. This supports the findings by Williams (2001) that suggest effective teachers who create cultures of honesty in their classrooms achieve this by employing a “two-pronged approach” (p. 237). The six participants in this research project related how they stressed to students the importance of taking pride of ownership in their work. It became clear however, that the second prong – “public shame to which the student would be exposed” – was not as common because the “shame” was either not a desirable course of action, or not always within the teachers’ control. Although this will be explored further in the following section on enforcement, it is worth repeating because the consequences of plagiarizing are components in the discussions of academic conduct.

According to the participants, conversations about academic integrity could change the dynamics of the classroom; however, students may cheat regardless of teachers’ efforts to maintain a culture of honesty. As Frank pointed out, it is challenging to know for sure if a student who may have considered plagiarizing when he or she first came into the class would have a change of mind after a discussion about the consequences. Sarah and Jillian recalled incidences when they were disappointed with students who cheated on essays, and although the students
promised never to do it again, both teachers questioned the genuineness of these students’ remarks. Conversations occur, but it may be difficult to determine the degree of sincerity on the part of students to uphold integrity, even if they know why it is important.

To have a discussion, one requires two contributing parties. The interview data suggest that students did not engage in a dialogue, but rather, accepted that plagiarism is wrong and that there could be consequences for their actions. As the teachers in this study said, if the students do not ask questions, we are going to treat them like adults and hold them accountable for their actions. Natalie and Frank, in addition to the other four participants, explained how they were willing to help students work through concerns about citations and how to gather original research, but students often did not come for extra assistance. A conclusion that can be drawn, based on the data, is that students need to become more engaged with this conversation, while educators must take the initiative to structure instructional workshops within their schools. As Kate suggested, workshops at the beginning of the school year about plagiarism and academic honesty could be hosted to make students realize they cannot be passive in their learning.

The results from these interviews demonstrate the willingness of teachers to have discussions with students. Furthermore, this research project confirms that, based on discussions facilitated in humanities classes, teachers perceive students as understanding academic integrity and what it entails. While recounting one-on-one interactions with students caught plagiarizing, participants did not express feelings of dejection. Their reactions supported those in the study by Williams (2008) regarding the “emotional impact of plagiarism”, but the “betrayal, anger, and visceral sense of disappointment” did not obscure their determination to have conversations about academic integrity (p. 350). This is interesting when one considers that Williams (2008) found, if trust is compromised between teacher and student, the teacher may react by treating the student(s)
differently. Although teachers in this study referenced their strong aversion to cheating and lying, Jillian explained that it did not mean the channels of communication were closed. As in Williams’ (2008) study, there was no suggestion that the teacher would be less likely to have a conversation about the importance of ethical conduct in academia. Natalie also endorsed this idea by elaborating on how becoming jaded toward engaging in conversations about plagiarism only undermines the responsibility of educators and the experience of the students. If teachers and students are not willing to help each other understand the viewpoint of the other, how can strategies be developed to deal with plagiarism and cheating? This is an endeavour that would support the findings by researchers like Spaulding (2009) and Williams (2008) who interrogate how to develop strategies for addressing academic dishonesty. For Williams (2008), action plans can be effective if both teachers and students approach conversations with open minds and control over their emotions. Similarly, Spaulding (2009) states that strategies can be developed if both parties work from a singular definition of academic integrity: both need to understand how the other defines academic honesty before strategies to address it can be implemented (p. 185).

Upholding Integrity

Based on data gathered from the six participants, it is possible to draw three conclusions on how their upholding of academic integrity resulted in the restructuring of assignments and incorporation of different assessment strategies in their courses. These practices have implications for teaching at the elementary and high school levels, but will be explained as they pertain to the secondary school context in which they were described by participants.
Thoughtful Assessment Design: Scaffolding, Samples and In-Class Tasks

Each of the teachers interviewed described scaffolding – breaking down assignments into smaller units and providing feedback throughout the process – as being helpful in deterring plagiarism and encouraging critical thinking for in-class tasks. Explaining how they structure their classes and design curriculum, Jillian and Frank stressed the importance of process work, and showing students that putting effort into it can result in a strong final product. These sentiments were echoed by Kate, Natalie, Sarah and Lucy, each of whom agreed that students need to see the connection between work ethic and decent grades. There was inconsistency with regard to how essays are assigned in English classes because process work has rendered them almost non-existent in some courses. For example, Kate and Lucy expressed concern over how research essays, even in grade 12, are appearing as diluted forms of their former selves. As Lucy mentioned, essays are being scaffolded to the point where students are submitting pieces of an essay at different points throughout the process, and not necessarily an essay in its entirety. While acknowledging the benefit of scaffolding, she worries at how long the essay, as an assignment, will continue to exist as a singular document written and submitted at one time. Kate concurred that, although research is still part of the essay writing, chunking may be ‘holding students’ hands’ too much along the way. Sarah, whose courses have essays that are handed in as full documents as opposed to segments, agreed that this is a trend in teaching, but that it does a disservice to students pursuing their academic studies. Frank also confirmed that thoughtful assessment practice is necessary, but teachers have to remind themselves for whom they are doing it. A question that many posed during the interviews was, if written assessments are shortened to avoid plagiarism cases, then how are the honest students who may want to learn and grow from
producing longer research essays impacted? Students have to take responsibility for their products, and breaking something down too much could result in it losing value or meaning.

An overwhelming recommendation to enforce academic integrity was to keep folders of student work gathered throughout the term so that samples can be cross-referenced in matters where there is a discrepancy. Instead of giving open-book tests, the teachers in this study endorsed collecting student work and creating written assignments that are completed entirely in-class in order to acquire authentic writing samples. Kate outlined an example of how students hand in work at the end of a work period, and the products are initialed before being filed away and redistributed the following day. Supervising student work in class affords teachers the opportunity to see what students are capable of under pressure, but more importantly, on their own. As Natalie and Lucy reminded me during the interview however, students in this generation are keyboard thinkers, and their products might not be as well-thought out when written by hand. Scheduling visits to computer labs is often challenging and is not always feasible. The matter of handwritten essays completed in-class, as Kate, Lucy and Frank said, is taken into consideration during grading. Also, the reality of scheduling blocks of time for these assessments can pose a logistical challenge. This practice may not be plausible in all circumstances, but it was offered as one of the most effective methods of plagiarism prevention because it made cheating and bringing in outside materials virtually impossible.

*Professional Judgment and Trust*

As explained by each of the participants in this study, exercising personal judgment is one of the most common practices when it comes to both identifying plagiarism and enforcing consequences of academic dishonesty. Professional judgment was cited as the preferred method
of plagiarism detection. Even for the two teachers who regularly use Turnitin.com, they proposed that prior to plagiarism-detection programs, catching student plagiarism was often not as challenging because there was a shift in tone, language or content in the student’s work that made it evident. A point that Natalie made however, highlights a significant challenge to this application of professional judgment. Recounting an incident with a student, she explained that she knew the paper was plagiarized, but was not able to prove it. Even if she had used Turnitin, papers written by individuals that are bought and submitted will not be flagged in the originality reports because they are technically original work, even though the student’s action of submitting the paper is academically dishonest and a form of plagiarism. How can teachers protect the integrity of the honest students, who put in the time and effort to research and write their own paper, when there is no proof to substantiate their professional judgment that the dishonest student who bought their paper plagiarized? This type of academic dishonesty is difficult to convict because the proof is elusive, but the role of in-class assessments was discussed as one way to respond.

When cases of plagiarism occurred, respondents perceived their professional judgment as exercised fairly and in accordance with school and board policies. Weighing mitigating factors, such as the number of repeated offences, maturity of students and grade level, was crucial to making decisions on how to proceed. In specific examples of interactions with students, teachers explained how there were expected procedures regarding who to contact after the proof of plagiarism was attained, and what they were allowed to do regarding the actual assessment. There was no policy that bound them to react a certain way. Their evaluation of the situation and the mitigating factors took precedence. A conclusion drawn from these interviews is that there was no “black-and-white” response to deal with plagiarism.
Regarding the enforcement of consequences, professional judgment once again played a significant role. Without a unified department response that essentially dictates the actions of the teacher, the educators had relative autonomy when addressing this issue. The majority of participants said that entering the incident into online, staff-accessible student information repositories ensured colleagues could read about occurrences saved in a student’s file. In addition, teachers could grant a zero on the assignment, contact the administrators, meet with parents or guardians, and give the student a chance to resubmit the assignment. Each of the teachers in this study elaborated on their school’s procedures for responding to plagiarism cases, but what became apparent was the lack of consistency with regard to disciplinary measures.

In some cases, teachers said that consequences for the same action could differ from teacher-to-teacher within the same department depending on the perspective of the teacher. As many of the teachers commented, students are given repeated chances to make up for the plagiarism, especially if it is their first offence. While some cases are circumstantial and require professional judgment, others are given warnings. Many of the participants in this study however, recognize that this likely does not impact whether the student will repeatedly offend. If there is a perceived lack of consequences for actions, what is preventing students from taking the risk? Students’ perceptions that the consequences were ‘light slaps’, if anything at all, projected what McCabe and Treviño (2002) thought was counterproductive to cultivating environments of academic honesty. They found that schools with “honour codes” were spaces in which students are less likely to cheat because the school culture included an understanding that consequences for actions that violated academic codes were acted upon.

Overall, participants claimed that it is difficult to completely trust students to produce original work or cite outside materials. Although none of the participants treated students as
already guilty from the moment they entered the classroom, they were increasingly vigilant when written work was submitted. This notion of reverse onus is not a reality that played out in these participants’ classes. As many of the participants said, modeling academic integrity was more important than using Turnitin as a trap to catch students cheating. In his study about trust and ethical considerations of Turnitin, Clanton (2009) argues that, if honest students are perceived as guilty, this could negatively impact them. If they have to prove their innocence by passing the Turnitin checkpoint, does that inhibit their creativity or expression in the class? It is clear from these interviews that the participants did not explicitly tell their students they were not trusted. As Natalie expressed, it was more important for her to trust her students so that if they broke that trust, it was more serious an infraction than if they were already cast as guilty parties. Agreeing with these ideas, Sarah and Kate experienced cases where students expressed regret for letting their teachers down by cheating. Would these reactions, if sincere, have occurred if the instructors had fallen into the “default posture” that Clanton (2009) remarks is becoming more natural and common in today’s classrooms (p. 23)?

Moral behaviour in this study is based on an understanding that lying and cheating, as well as actions that intentionally deceive another individual, are unethical actions. The teachers in this study believe in the potential and capabilities of their students. Rather than project negativity toward students’ potential ethical conduct, respondents supported Clanton’s (2009) belief that trust can support a nurturing classroom space. In order to enhance their students’ learning and understanding of academically responsible conduct, respondents felt that modeling appropriate research practice and referencing were important actions. In their classes, this takes the form of orally referring to researched material when teaching lessons and interpretations of events or literature, including citations within or at the end of assignment outlines, handouts and notes
projected or physically provided to students. As one participant said, “practise what you preach if you want students to take it seriously.” Teachers are leading by example, and trusting that their students will respect and reflect the same ethical behaviour.

A conclusion from this study is that teachers do not perceive students as taking academic integrity seriously, which is consistent with literature on the topic. As many respondents commented in their interviews, students hear the “plagiarism talk” multiple times per year, and might start to tune it out until it affects them personally. Even though each of the six participants mentioned support for academically appropriate scholarship at their schools, Kate suggested that perhaps mandatory sessions for every incoming student could increase student involvement in the conversation. Could participation in a mandatory workshop be a way to extend students’ understanding of academic honesty as something that has repercussions beyond the classroom? Would it nullify the ‘ignorance’ argument, and therefore make enforcing consequences less problematic? Or, would mandatory sessions about academic honesty send the message that, collectively, students are not trusted to act with integrity? Trying to make students understand that academic integrity affects everyone, not only the plagiarists, is something that was identified by respondents as a significant challenge.

Although this paper did not explore if mandatory sessions are an effective response, it is worth considering Natalie’s philosophy that extending trust to students can go a long way in cultivating a culture of honesty in the classroom. Implementation of mandatory workshops may run counterintuitive to this attitude. To what extent does this presume guilt and influence the teacher-student relationship, in addition to student output? On the other hand, as other participants stated, how can we protect the students who ‘play by the rules’? Sessions that are conducted for each student hold those who plagiarize accountable because they cannot claim ignorance of how
seriously their school takes academic integrity policy. For participants in this study, teacher-initiated conversations in their respective humanities classes were the reality; however, it is worth considering how trusting students factors into conversations, policy and the application of professional judgment.

*Turnitin.com*

None of the respondents considered the use of plagiarism-detection software as sending the message that teachers do not trust their students. Rather, four teachers saw its use as limited and time consuming to learn and operate. Ironically, the two participants who actively use Turnitin found it saved time in the long run because the software narrowed their focus on who should be investigated for potential offences. Turnitin’s Originality Reports provide proof, as opposed to relying on instinct. Depending solely on professional judgment, a practice with potential for human error, can also result in teachers spending more time trying to search for the plagiarized documents on the Internet to find proof of an offence. Jillian and Frank, who use it in each of their humanities classes, considered Turnitin invaluable, and said that students view it as accepted practice. They were not left with the impression that students felt mistrusted. Students did not seem anxious about uploading their work to the service. It was part of regular course procedure, and considerations about whether their teachers trusted them were not raised.

Although this study found that Turnitin is often a personal choice, participants acknowledged that Turnitin is a tool for detecting plagiarism, but it is left to the judgment of the instructor on how to proceed. This supports what Frank stated was a limit of any PDS, not just Turnitin. The service identifies potential plagiarism, but it does not tell you what the next steps should be. Those are left to the personal decision of the instructor. As Turnitin states in a 2010
online FAQ publication about the service and software, “instructors and students alike should understand their institution’s academic integrity policies before turning in written assignments…Turnitin encourages best practices for using and citing other people’s written material.” It might be able to deter plagiarism, and it certainly helps detect it, but it does not necessarily prevent academic dishonesty as effectively as discussing the importance of citing scholarship in person. This frames the software as potentially being a learning tool for catching incorrect citations, but it is clear from the interviews that Turnitin is not used in this way. Rather, it functions as a detection tool and is not the catalyst for discussions about how to reference. Instead, teachers and library sessions at schools use their own examples and handouts to instruct students on correct citation guidelines.

Another trend that appeared in the data was inconsistent views on the effectiveness of Turnitin.com. For those who used the service, it was considered an efficient line of defence and a way of protecting the contributions of honest students in humanities classes. In this respect, it can serve the dual role as a deterrent and a helpful program for teachers to identify potential violations. To rely only on Turnitin however, may downplay the importance of ongoing attentiveness to identify and address potential violations, and the role of professional judgment when dealing with the plagiarism once it occurs. For the teachers who did not use this plagiarism prevention service, gathering writing samples from students early in the term and then exercising professional judgment once assessments were submitted were the most effective strategies they used in humanities courses. A conclusion that can be drawn from the data therefore, is that Turnitin remains a personal decision. The reasons provided by the four teachers who do not use it ranged from unfamiliarity with the service to not having the contract at their school. What is consistent among this group is that Turnitin is not seen as the most effective method of detection
if only used in isolation. They reflected Vanacker’s (2011) study in believing that using methods of detection builds confidence in the integrity of scholarship, and could make students more willing to contribute to this community. As the two participants commented, Turnitin may demonstrate to students that teachers will use every method available to ensure the integrity of the space and work produced. Interestingly, Turnitin was not dismissed for reasons relating to trust. For instance, participants did not feel sensitive about how the use of Turnitin could be perceived by their students. Turnitin usage was connected more to personal comfort with computer programs and licensing contracts than pedagogical stance.

**Implications for Current Teaching Practice**

As outlined in the second chapter of this report, the body of literature on the topic of ethical conduct by students in a ‘wired’ world is growing. An ABC Online News article on April 29, 2013, featured an interview with Professor Angelo Angelis from Hunter College in New York City. He recounted an incident where he failed six college students in his History class for plagiarizing content from an Internet site without providing appropriate accreditation. The story seemed similar to so many other accounts of plagiarism cases in the news, until I read that the college students plagiarized their content from a personal website published by a grade five class. The lack of due diligence of these college students, for the sake of expediency or laziness, resulted in failed grades due to plagiarized content from “a bunch of elementary school kids” (“A Cheating Crisis in America,” 2013). Plagiarism is a reality educators have faced in their classes for years, regardless of the academic level and age of the students. With so many instances being revealed and, in some cases, sensationalized, discussions of practical ways educators can respond have become increasingly necessary.
I am a proponent of identifying a root cause and not devising “band-aid” solutions to larger issues, and I support the respected body of literature that has addressed why students plagiarize or behave unethically. The works of scholars who have studied this topic have brought us to this point, and inform efforts to continue the dialogue. I believe conversation must now become more active in ways to protect academically honest contributors, as opposed to focusing on the unethical conduct of cheaters. While remaining dedicated to understanding reasons for plagiarism, I do not believe it is defeatist to approach academic integrity from the standpoint of how we are going to practically respond. Whether PDS are tools or traps for students remains debatable, but I feel that services like Turnitin.com can be instructional devices, rather than criminalizing enforcement strategies. It is a matter of upholding our own integrity as educators that should drive a feeling of responsibility toward coordinating efforts to promote academic honesty and deal unapologetically with proven, fact-based violations.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

In this growing field, there are many different directions that future research can take. Based on the findings from this study, the following section offers some ideas for continued investigation into plagiarism, and poses questions that could be stepping stones for other trajectories related to academic integrity.

*Turnitin.com and Honour Codes*

Technology, with its benefits and drawbacks, has factored into how students cheat. Copying off a partner is increasingly being replaced with acquiring essays from ghost-writers at paper mills. For researchers in this field, an appreciation of the world and mindset of the “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001) is necessary. Despite current studies that reveal Turnitin.com can
produce inaccurate Originality Reports (Bishop, 2006; Royce, 2003), do the drawbacks truly outweigh the potential benefits? As the teachers in this study stated during interviews, there are times when plagiarism is suspected, but cannot be proven by simply typing the suspected phrase into Google. In these cases, Turnitin may identify breaches of academic conduct that professional judgment and teacher initiative may overlook. When papers are bought for a fee however, Turnitin is limited in how it can support teachers and protect the honest contributions of ethical students. Considering the comments made by participants in this study regarding students trying to test the system to see what they can get away with, future investigations can focus on the effectiveness of Turnitin.com and whether it should be a mandatory first line of defence, especially at a time when how students plagiarize is quickly changing.

Taking into consideration the concerns over uploading student work to an online database, some schools have already started issuing parental and student permission forms for work to be uploaded onto Turnitin.com. This plagiarism prevention service complies with Canadian copyright and privacy laws, but one school in the GTA has permission forms requiring students between the ages of 14 and 17 to obtain parental permission before using Turnitin.com for written assignments. In the document issued by teachers to students in any course that uses Turnitin.com, the opening paragraph reads:

At our board [which shall remain anonymous], everything we do is designed to help each child achieve the best of his or her ability. As per the board’s Safe Schools policy #48 and our School Codes of Conduct, all students must practise honesty and integrity by not participating in or encouraging plagiarism or misrepresentation of original work. In order to ensure students abide by these requirements, the board will
be using the services of Turnitin.com an Internet-based plagiarism-prevention service supported by the Ministry of Education.

Does the issuing and signing of this letter change the tone of the conversation? How do students respond to signing a document? To what extent can this document be used as a contract holding the student responsible for his or her actions and result in the carrying out of consequences to their fullest extent? Should students have to sign a statement acknowledging their understanding and adherence to their school’s honour code? Ethically, should Turnitin be an article in a school’s honour code? Could standardizing the use of Turnitin across school boards and departments impact plagiarism rates and promote honesty? Studies have investigated the effectiveness of honour codes, but not exclusively at the high school level within Canada (Bowers, 1964; Brooks, Cunningham, Hinson, Brown & Weaver, 1981; McCabe & Treviño, 1993, 2002). Their studies independently confirmed that schools with honour codes had lower incidences of cheating on campus. It remains unclear if strategies used by professors at the university or college level can apply to high school teachers. Yet, the premise is sound and is an area for future investigation.

Cultural Factors: Schools and Students

Both during and after the formal interviews, participants in this study shared experiences of students and their parents who have confronted them regarding lower-than-expected grades on assignments. The six participants reflected the findings in literature that support this drive toward achieving high grades in order to be competitive for post-secondary applications. A factor that has been mentioned repeatedly is how students are willing to compromise their own ethics in order to attain these scores. As Sarah pointed out, if the perceived culture of the school is one with high academic standards, then students feel the necessity to compete and live up to these expectations.
In some cases, as elaborated during the interview, students plagiarize in order to demonstrate proficiency rather than take the initiative to seek assistance with research and referencing. Working from the premise that each of the participants is from a school that highly values academic standards, the question becomes how schools promote academic honesty.

As Kate, Jillian and Frank suggested, if students do not see violations taken seriously, then their mindset toward cheating may not change. This is consistent with Bowers’ (1964) study, which demonstrated that peers who perceived others as “getting away with” cheating were more likely to follow their lead. If some students in a course do not take ethical scholarship seriously, what impact does that have on the opinions of their peers who see this behaviour? In what ways does their appreciation for the importance of honesty, original thinking and critical scholarship potentially change? As existing research states, minimal consequences for plagiarizing in high school directly impact students’ decisions to act unethically. Could the exercising of professional judgment on a case-by-case basis have an impact on this perception? As the participants explained, their departments do not have a concerted response to plagiarism; instead, they can take the matter to administrators if there is substantial proof that would require further disciplinary action. For example, if an agreed upon department standard held that students, in cases of plagiarism where proof is attained, are immediately granted a zero on the assignment, how would this influence the ethical climate of a classroom (Hulsart & McCarthy, 2009)? If department policies were introduced and followed through, would they have an impact on the number of plagiarism cases? How would this challenge individual board policies regarding ‘second chances’? As Natalie questioned in her interview however, if the objective of schools and responsibility of teachers is to educate, what role does such disciplinary action have in teaching students moral behaviour? Further research could consider how department policies affect
plagiarism rates in humanities classes, but could query how individual conceptions of the teacher’s role factor into following through on policies.

Informed by my own experiences working with international students and English Language Learners (ELL), as well as the responses provided during the interviews for this study, the culture of the students plays a significant role in conversations about academic integrity. Even if the educators model honest behaviour in classrooms as research currently suggests (Reina & Reina, 2008), more is required to address plagiarism among student populations. The scope of this research limited the extent to which it debated whether one could teach ethical behaviour or moral conduct, but that is where future study can advance this research. If students arrive at Canadian schools from systems that do not stress the value of citations, references and critical thinking, can teachers be expected to teach ethical conduct? As Jillian pointed out during her interview, “I guess it’s back to character education. How do we teach them that it’s wrong?” Or, are students expected to adhere to the policies, expectations and standards of the system in which they currently study? The general consensus among the participants in this study is that students have to take the initiative to be self-regulating learners who take advantage of the resources and support available to help ease this transition. Regardless of the system from which they come, following the academic integrity policies and procedures of the school, board and Ministry is mandatory.

There is a gap in literature regarding how international students perceive and navigate conversations about academic honesty. I became personally interested in how knowledge seeking and learning is culturally contextual when I was first afforded the opportunity to study plagiarism and academic integrity in 2011. Working with students in the capacity of a teacher candidate, I extended my understanding of how ELL students understand academic integrity. What I found,
anecdotally, is that plagiarism is rampant among certain student populations that were educated in systems that emphasized highly-competitive testing and memorization over critical thinking and crediting the original author. When asked if they would risk plagiarizing in this system, students surprisingly admitted that they would try only if they were confident they would not get caught. Feelings of guilt or anxiety over the morality of these actions were dismissed as non-issues. The shame and embarrassment they would bring to their families were only as a result of getting caught, not because of the act of cheating itself. Rather, whatever needed to be done to get ahead and be competitive would be seen as acceptable and even encouraged. In fact, as one student explained, memorizing and reciting facts verbatim was a sign of a sharp mind, thus rendering rephrasing into one’s own words futile.

This perspective was consistent with the views expressed by three of the six participants in this study who had experiences with students who were caught plagiarizing, but dismissed the charges as nothing serious as long as their parents were not told. What happens when students who leave a strict system come to Canadian schools? Why are they some of the most prevalent offenders when it comes to plagiarizing and being academically dishonest? Is it the perception of lax standards and minimal consequences? Or, does it have more to do with culturally-informed understandings of ownership over ideas and published work (Buranen, 1999)? During my conversations with some students enrolled in ESL programs, they demonstrated an understanding of academic integrity and the meaning of plagiarism, but revealed that they choose to plagiarize because the risk is perceived as low and penalties, if given, are not serious. Interestingly, even if they do not entirely understand why they need to reference source material, the perception apparently spreading among certain cultural pockets is that it is ‘easy’ to plagiarize and there is no need to learn about academic integrity since disciplinary action is minimal. How this impacts the
reputation of the Canadian education system and its schools is worth addressing. This could be a starting point for policy developers and educators to understand how to effectively respond to increases in unethical conduct.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into how secondary school teachers discuss and uphold academic integrity in their humanities courses, and to consider the results of these conversations on classroom practice. This research found that thoughtful assessment design, exercising professional judgment, understanding the benefits of plagiarism detection software, and appreciating how school and student cultures factor into the conversation are features in teacher-initiated dialogues about academic integrity. As revealed in the study, participants are confident that students know what it expected of them and what it means to uphold academic integrity. Since assignments continue to be plagiarized, teachers have had to respond by adjusting teaching strategies. Although the students” best interests are at the core of these adjustments, there appears to be tension regarding to what extent these changes in assessment dilute the research, writing and critical thinking processes. Scaffolding is a beneficial teaching practice, but may risk being overused. Exercising professional judgment may also place teachers in uncomfortable positions because plagiarism cases often fall into, as one participant described, a “grey area.”

The teachers interviewed for this study shared experiences that demonstrate the extent to which they engage in conversations about academic integrity, and what results these discussions have in their humanities classes. Each of the six participants acknowledged how their personal morality influenced their desire to uphold the integrity of their students. They discussed academic integrity policies with students at the beginning of semesters and before assignments, and the result is that students are sufficiently warned about the seriousness with which the instructor
regards cheating on assignments. For two of the six participants, the extent of their conversation includes referring to Turnitin.com and its application in humanities courses. How the presence of this Internet-based service impacts a students’ desire to plagiarize is difficult to discern, but based on conversations with both interviewees, students are accustomed to this program and recognize it as an extra layer of vigilance.

The final question in the interview referred to any advice respondents would give a new teacher about how to uphold academic integrity in their courses. Each of the participants provided realistic and helpful suggestions, and they were all in agreement on two points. First, teachers should be clear with their instructions for assessments in order to avoid ‘panic plagiarism.’

Second, teachers must follow through on their professional judgment regarding plagiarism cases. As Sarah said, “Just be straightforward with them. As soon as you can present it in a way that demonstrates how it will impact the rest of their lives, the more likely they will pay attention.” Both of these points raised by participants connect to the idea of having and following through on clearly outlined protocols for responding to academic integrity violations. Familiarizing oneself with school protocol and expectations for managing plagiarism cases is recommended. In addition, teachers new to the profession or new to a particular school or board are encouraged to read any assessment and evaluation policies that may be in place.

As one of the participants in this study suggested for new teachers in particular, understanding school procedures can help make conversations about and responses to dishonesty less intimidating. This is of the upmost importance because it helps educators navigate potentially challenging situations of breaches in academic codes of conduct, while making the “grey area” less murky for teachers and students alike. The findings described in this research report provide an opportunity for both experienced and novice teachers to gain further insight into the practices
of colleagues in the profession, and to negotiate how their individual perceptions might influence
the conversation about maintaining scholarly conduct in their classes. As the results of this study
have suggested, instructors – regardless of boards, grades and subject matter – must strive to find
a balance between teaching students about academic honesty and taking disciplinary actions.

McCabe’s perspective on the issue is worth mentioning as a closing point because he
acknowledges this as a focus of the Center for Academic Integrity. As he explained, “We need to
promote integrity. We need to get students to understand why integrity is important – as opposed
to policing dishonesty and then punishing that dishonesty.” (“A Cheating Crisis in America,”
2013). This research has attempted to demonstrate how there must be standardized and consistent
enforcement as well as awareness. Instruction about how to maintain the integrity of scholarship
and honest participation in the academic community is a constructive first step, but we must also
reflect on how our actions ensure that violations are taken seriously.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM

Academic Integrity in Secondary School Humanities Classes

Dear ________________,

This letter is an invitation to participate in a Master of Teaching Research Project (MTRP) investigating how academic integrity is discussed, negotiated and practiced in secondary school humanities classrooms (English, History and Philosophy classes). Your involvement in the study would include one audio recorded individual interview of approximately 45 minutes. Please review the form below for additional information.

If you agree to be interviewed, please sign and date the attached Consent Form and return it to Ms. Yoannou before the commencement of the interview. The form can be scanned and emailed to Ms. Yoannou (ashley.yoannou@mail.utoronto.ca), or submitted in person prior to the start of the interview. Participants who have not submitted a signed consent form prior to the interview will not be interviewed. Please ensure you retain a copy of this letter for your records.

Background

Academic integrity is an issue that continues to draw the attention of the academic community and media. From high-profile political figures caught submitting plagiarized documents, to reporters writing sections of articles that were appropriated from other sources, plagiarism is a topic in which stakeholders, both within and beyond scholarly institutions, have a keen interest. Exploring cultures of honesty within classrooms and the trust relationship between teacher and student as a basis for a safe learning environment is relevant and important given the increased attention to plagiarism in literature.

This study will explore how academic integrity policies are negotiated between students and teachers in humanities classes in public secondary schools, with particular focus on how anti-cheating tools are introduced, discussed and utilized. Academic integrity, within this study, is defined as an ethical principle governing the conduct of students and educators to ensure an environment of trust that promotes scholarly discussion and encourages innovation.

There are limited Ontario-based studies that ask teachers to what extent they discuss academic integrity with their students, and if teachers perceive academic integrity as necessary for promoting a scholarly conversation within their classes. Much of the recent examination on the issue of ethics and cultures of honesty is found within the post-secondary level or professional school context, and is rooted in American and British studies. This MTRP research will offer a qualitative description of how teachers regard plagiarism prevention tools, otherwise known as anti-cheating software, and if they consider them beneficial to promoting the learning process or questionable pedagogical practice.
Facility Requirements

Once informed consent has been obtained, the location and time of the interview will be mutually determined by the researcher and the participant. Technology (overhead projector, television, laptop and powerpoint screen) is not required, nor does the interview have to take place in a classroom setting. There must, however, be a desk or table upon which an audio recording device can be placed. The room must not be occupied by any other individuals besides yourself and the interviewer/Principal Investigator. Students and colleagues who are not participating in the study will not be permitted to enter the room during the session.

Method of Study

The audio-recorded interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Responses given during the interview will be transcribed in full. The privacy of all participants is protected through the use of pseudonyms for all names of persons, schools, and school boards. Confidential information collected during this study will be stored in a secure location and all data will be destroyed no later than five years after the successful completion of this study. No personal contact information will be collected or shared during the session. If you are interested in receiving the final report via email, please bring that to the attention of the Principal Investigator.

Right to Withdraw

If you decide to withdraw from the study, you may do so without negative consequences at any time up to the submission of the final paper in early April 2014. There is minimal risk associated with this research project. You will benefit from participating in this study to the extent that your perspective will further develop knowledge of this field of study.

Interviewer Background

Ms. Yoannou is currently enrolled in the Master of Teaching (MT) program at the Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. This two-year program offers the unique opportunity for candidates to gain classroom experience in four, four-week teaching-placement blocks, while also conducting a master’s level research project.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Yoannou. For further inquiries about the research process, you may contact the University of Toronto Office of Research Ethics at (416) 946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

Thank you for your assistance with this research project.

Sincerely,

Ms. A. Yoannou
Principal Investigator
ashley.yoannou@mail.utoronto.ca

Dr. E. Campbell
Research Supervisor
ecampbell@oise.utoronto.ca
CONSENT FORM

Having read and understood the nature, purpose and procedure of this study, I hereby consent to participate in a one individual interview to discuss plagiarism and academic integrity, and how both are negotiated in a high school setting. I recognize that my identity will be protected through the use of a pseudonym, and that audio recording is necessary for accuracy during the transcription process.

Name of Participant (please print):

__________________________________________________________________

Signature of Participant:

__________________________________________________________________

Signature of Principal Investigator:

__________________________________________________________________

Date:

_____________________________________________________________, 2013.

Please sign and date the attached consent form and return it to Ms. Yoannou before the commencement of the interview. The form can be scanned or emailed to Ms. Yoannou (ashley.yoannou@mail.utoronto.ca), or submitted prior to the start of the interview. Participants who have not submitted a signed consent form prior to the interview will not be allowed to participate.

Please ensure you retain a copy of this letter for your records.
APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your personal understanding of academic integrity?

2. (a) What do you say or do at the beginning of the school year to address the concept of academic integrity in your classroom? How do you reinforce this on an ongoing basis throughout the year?

(b) Can you think of a specific situation where the actions you took influenced the dynamic of your relationship with students? (If you told them that you used Turnitin, did you find this changed class dynamic in any way?)

3. Do you feel that students understand the meaning of academic integrity? What evidence do you have that demonstrates an understanding of academic integrity?

4. Have you been in a situation during which you discussed the consequences of an academic integrity violation with a student one-on-one? How did you handle this situation?

5. (a) What, if any, plagiarism detection tools or methods do you use in your classrooms?

(b) Which of these detection tools or methods, if any, do you find most/least effective?
6. At your school, what are some repercussions students face when they are caught plagiarizing?

7. Are there any factors that influence your approach to discussing plagiarism and academic integrity (e.g. grade, subject, stream [academic, applied, etc], time of year)?

8. (a) What resources are available at your school to educate you, as a teacher, about detecting and dealing with plagiarism?

   (b) To what extent do you feel technology has a beneficial or detrimental role in how you uphold academic integrity?

10. How do you perceive your students’ reaction when you use technology as a plagiarism detection tool?

11. What advice would you give to new teachers who want to be proactive about discussing the importance of academic integrity in their classrooms? Any tips on how to reduce potential academic dishonesty in the classroom?